MOONSHINE & CLOVER

LAURENCE HOUSMAN

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MOONSHINE & CLOVER

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SHINE, MOON! GROW CLOVER!
WHEN MY DAY IS OVER. L.H.

MOONSHINE & CLOVER

BY LAURENCE HOUSMAN

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THE PRINCE WITH THE NINE SORROWS

" Eight white peahens went down to the gate :
' Wait ! ' they said, ' little sister, wait ! '
They covered her up with feathers so fine ;
And none went out, when there went back nine."

A LONG time ago there lived a King and a Queen, who had an only son. As soon as he was born his mother gave him to the forester's wife to be nursed ; for she herself had to wear her crown all day and had no time for nursing. The forester's wife had just given birth to a little daughter of her own ; but she loved both children equally and nursed them together like twins.

One night the Queen had a dream that made the half of her hair turn grey. She dreamed that she saw the Prince her son at the age of twenty lying dead with a wound over the place of his heart ; and near him his foster-sister was standing, with a royal crown on her head, and his heart bleeding between her hands.

The next morning the Queen sent in great haste for the family Fairy, and told her of the dream. The Fairy said, " This can have but one meaning, and it is an evil one. There is some danger that threatens your son's life in his twentieth year, and his foster-sister is to be the cause of it ; also, it seems she is to make herself Queen. But leave her

to me, and I will avert the evil chance; for the dream coming beforehand shows that the Fates mean that he should be saved."

The Queen said, "Do anything; only do not destroy the forester's wife's child, for, as yet at least, she has done no wrong. Let her only be carried away to a safe place and made secure and treated well. I will not have my son's happiness grow out of another one's grave."

The Fairy said, "Nothing is so safe as a grave when the Fates are about. Still, I think I can make everything quite safe within reason, and leave you a clean as well as a quiet conscience."

The little Prince and the forester's daughter grew up together till they were a year old; then, one day, when their nurse came to look for them, the Prince was found, but his foster-sister was lost; and though the search for her was long, she was never seen again, nor could any trace of her be found.

The baby Prince pined and pined, and was so sorrowful over her loss that they feared for a time that he was going to die. But his foster-mother, in spite of her grief over her own child's disappearance, nursed him so well and loved him so much that after a while he recovered his strength.

Then the forester's wife gave birth to another daughter, as if to console herself for the loss of the first. But the same night that the child was born the Queen had just the same dream over again. She dreamed that she saw her son lying dead at the age of twenty; and there was the wound in his breast, and the forester's daughter was stand-

ing by with his heart in her hand and a royal crown upon her head.

The poor Queen's hair had gone quite white when she sent again for the family Fairy, and told her how the dream had repeated itself. The Fairy gave her the same advice as before, quieting her fears, and assuring her that however persistent the Fates might be in threatening the Prince's life, all in the end should be well.

Before another year was passed the second of the forester's daughters had disappeared; and the Prince and his foster-mother cried themselves ill over a loss that had been so cruelly renewed. The Queen, seeing how great were the sorrow and the love that the Prince bore for his foster-sisters, began to doubt in her heart and say, "What have I done? Have I saved my son's life by taking away his heart?"

Now every year the same thing took place, the forester's wife giving birth to a daughter, and the Queen on the same night having the same fearful dream of the fate that threatened her son in his twentieth year; and afterwards the family Fairy would come, and then one day the forester's wife's child would disappear, and be heard of no more.

At last when nine daughters in all had been born to the forester's wife and lost to her when they were but a year old, the Queen fell very ill. Every day she grew weaker and weaker, and the little Prince came and sat by her, holding her hand and looking at her with a sorrowful face. At last one night (it was just a year after the last of the forester's children had disappeared) she woke suddenly,

stretching out her arms and crying. "Oh, Fairy," she cried, "the dream, the dream!" And covering her face with her hands, she died.

The little Prince was now more than ten years old, and the very saddest of mortals. He said that there were nine sorrows hidden in his heart, of which he could not get rid; and that at night, when all the birds went home to roost, he heard cries of lamentation and pain; but whether these came from very far away, or out of his own heart he could not tell.

Yet he grew slenderly and well, and had such grace and tenderness in his nature that all who saw him loved him. His foster-mother, when he spoke to her of his nine sorrows, tried to comfort him, calling him her own nine joys; and, indeed, he was all the joy left in life for her.

When the Prince neared his twentieth year, the King his father felt that he himself was becoming old and weary of life. "I shall not live much longer," he thought: "very soon my son will be left alone in the world. It is right, therefore, now that he should know of the danger ahead that threatens his life." For till then the Prince had not known anything; all had been kept a secret between the Queen and the King and the family Fairy.

The old King knew of the Prince's nine sorrows, and often he tried to believe that they came by chance, and had nothing to do with the secret that sat at the root of his son's life. But now he feared more and more to tell the Prince the story of those nine dreams, lest the knowledge should indeed

serve but as the crowning point of his sorrows, and altogether break his heart for him.

Yet there was so much danger in leaving the thing untold that at last he summoned the Prince to his bedside, meaning to tell him all. The King had worn himself so ill with anxiety and grief in thinking over the matter, that now to tell all was the only means of saving his life.

The Prince came and knelt down, and leaned his head on his father's pillow; and the King whispered into his ear the story of the dreams, and of how for his sake all the Prince's foster-sisters had been spirited away.

Before his tale was done he could no longer bear to look into his son's face, but closed his eyes, and, with long silences between, spoke as one who prayed.

When he had ended he lay quite still, and the Prince kissed his closed eyelids and went softly out of the room.

"Now I know," he said to himself; "now at last!" And he came through the wood and knocked at his foster-mother's door. "Other mother," he said to her, "give me a kiss for each of my sisters, for now I am going out into the world to find them, to be rid of the sorrows in my heart."

"They can never be found!" she cried, but she kissed him nine times. "And this," she said, "was Monica, and this was Ponica, and this was Veronica," and so she went over every name. "But now they are only names!" she wept, as she let him go.

He went along, and he went along, mile after

mile. "Where may you be going to, fair sir?" asked an old peasant, at whose cabin the Prince sought shelter when night came to the first day of his wanderings. "Truly," answered the Prince, "I do not know how far or whither I need to go; but I have a finger-post in my heart that keeps pointing me."

So that night he stayed there, and the next day he went on.

"Where to so fast?" asked a woodcutter when the second night found him in the thickest and loneliest parts of the forest. "Here the night is so dark and the way so dangerous, one like you should not go alone."

"Nay, I know nothing," said the Prince, "only I feel like a weather-cock in a wind that keeps turning me to its will!"

After many days he came to a small long valley rich in woods and water-courses, but no road ran through it. More and more it seemed like the world's end, a place unknown, or forgotten of its old inhabitants. Just at the end of the valley, where the woods opened into clear slopes and hollows towards the west, he saw before him, low and overgrown, the walls of a little tumble-down grange. "There," he said to himself when he saw it, "I can find shelter for to-night. Never have I felt so tired before, or such a pain at my heart!"

Before long he came to a little gate, and a winding path that led in among lawns and trees to the door of an old house. The house seemed as if it had been once lived in, but there was no sign of any

life about it now. He pushed open the door, and suddenly there was a sharp rustling of feathers, and nine white peahens rose up from the ground and flew out of the window into the garden.

The Prince searched the whole house over, and found it a mere ruin; the only signs of life to be seen were the white feathers that lifted and blew about over the floors.

Outside, the garden was gathering itself together in the dusk, and the peahens were stepping daintily about the lawns, picking here and there between the blades of grass. They seemed to suit the gentle sadness of the place, which had an air of grief that has grown at ease with itself.

The Prince went out into the garden, and walked about among the quietly stepping birds; but they took no heed of him. They came picking up their food between his very feet, as though he were not there. Silence held all the air, and in the cleft of the valley the day drooped to its end.

Just before it grew dark, the nine white peahens gathered together at the foot of a great elm, and lifting up their throats they wailed in chorus. Their lamentable cry touched the Prince's heart; "Where," he asked himself, "have I heard such sorrow before?" Then all with one accord the birds sprang rustling up to the lowest boughs of the elm, and settled themselves to roost.

The Prince went back to the house, to find some corner amid its half-ruined rooms to sleep in. But there the air was close, and an unpleasant smell of moisture came from the floor and walls: so, the night being warm, he returned to the garden, and

folding himself in his cloak lay down under the tree where the nine peahens were at roost.

For a long time he tried to sleep, but could not, there was so much pain and sorrow in his heart.

Presently when it was close upon midnight, over his head one of the birds stirred and ruffled through all its feathers; and he heard a soft voice say:

"Sisters, are you awake?"

All the other peahens lifted their heads, and turned towards the one that had spoken, saying, "Yes, sister, we are awake."

Then the first one said again, "Our brother is here."

They all said, "He is our enemy; it is for him that we endure this sorrow."

"To-night," said the first, "we may all be free."

They answered, "Yes, we may all be free! Who will go down and peck out his heart? Then we shall be free."

And the first who had spoken said, "I will go down!"

"Do not fail, sister!" said all the others. "For if you fail you can speak to us no more."

The first peahen answered, "Do not fear that I shall fail!" And she began stepping down the long boughs of the elm.

The Prince lying below heard all that was said. "Ah! poor sisters," he thought, "have I found you at last; and are all these sorrows brought upon you for me?" And he unloosed his doublet, and opened his vest, making his breast bare for the peahen to come and peck out his heart.

He lay quite still with his eyes shut, and when

she reached the ground the peahen found him lying there, as it seemed to her fast asleep, with his white breast bare for the stroke of her beak.

Then so fair he looked to her, and so gentle in his youth, that she had pity on him, and stood weeping by his side, and laying her head against his, whispered, "O, brother, once we lay as babes together and were nursed at the same breast! How can I peck out your heart?"

Then she stole softly back into the tree, and crouched down again by her companions. They said to her, "Our minute of midnight is nearly gone. Is there blood on your beak! Have you our brother's heart for us?" But the other answered never a word.

In the morning the peahens came rustling down out of the elm, and went searching for fat carnation buds and anemone seeds among the flower-beds in the garden. To the Prince they showed no sign either of hatred or fear, but went to and fro carelessly, pecking at the ground about his feet. Only one came with drooping head and wings, and sleeked itself to his caress, and the Prince, stooping down, whispered in her ear, "O, sister, why did you not peck out my heart?"

At night, as before, the peahens all cried in chorus as they went up into the elm; and the Prince came and wrapped himself in his cloak, and lay down at the foot of it to watch.

At midnight the eight peahens lifted their heads, and said, "Sister, why did you fail last night?" But their sister gave them not a word.

"Alas!" they said, "now she has failed, unless

one of us succeed, we shall never hear her speak with her human voice again. Why is it that you weep so," they said again, " now when deliverance is so near ? " For the poor peahen was shaken with weeping, and her tears fell down in loud drops upon the ground.

Then the next sister said, " I will go down ! He is asleep. Be certain, I will not fail ! " So she climbed softly down the tree, and the Prince opened his shirt and laid his breast bare for her to come and take out his heart.

Presently she stood by his side, and when she saw him, she too had pity on him for the youth and kindness of his face. And once she shut her eyes, and lifted her head for the stroke ; but then weakness seized her, and she laid her head softly upon his heart and said, " Once the breast that gave me milk gave milk also to you. You were my sister's brother, and she spared you. How can I peck out your heart ? " And having said this she went softly back into the tree, and crouched down again among her sisters.

They said to her, " Have you blood upon your beak ? Is his heart ours ? " But she answered them no word.

The next day the two sisters, who because their hearts betrayed them had become mute, followed the Prince wherever he went, and stretched up their heads to his caress. But the others went and came indifferently, careless except for food ; for until midnight their human hearts were asleep ; only now the two sisters who had given their voices away had regained their human hearts perpetually.

That night the same thing happened as before.

" Sisters," said the youngest, " to-night I will go down, since the two eldest of us have failed. My wrong is fresher in my heart than theirs ! Be sure I shall not fail ! " So the youngest peahen came down from the tree, and the Prince laid his heart bare for her beak; but the bird could not find the will to peck it out. And so it was the next night, and the next, until eight nights were gone.

So at last only one peahen was left. At midnight she raised her head, saying, " Sisters, are you awake ? "

They all turned, and gazed at her weeping, but could say no word.

Then she said, " You have all failed, having all tried but me. Now if I fail we shall remain mute and captive for ever, more undone by the loss of our last remaining gift of speech than we were at first. But I tell you, dear sisters, I will not fail; for the happiness of you all lies with me now ! "

Then she went softly down the tree; and one by one they all went following her, and weeping, to see what the end would be.

They stood some way apart, watching with upturned heads, and their poor throats began catching back a wish to cry as the little peahen, the last of the sisters, came and stood by the Prince.

Then she, too, looked in his face, and saw the white breast made bare for her beak; and the love of him went deep down into her heart. And she tried and tried to shut her eyes and deal the stroke, but could not.

She trembled and sighed, and turned to look at her sisters, where they all stood weeping silently

together. "They have spared him," she said to herself: "why should not I?"

But the Prince, seeing that she, too, was about to fail like the rest of them, turned and said, as if in his sleep, "Come, come, little peahen, and peck out my heart!"

At that she turned back again to him, and laid her head down upon his heart and cried more sadly than them all.

Then he said, "You have eight sisters, and a mother who cries for her children to return!" Yet still she thought he was dreaming, and speaking only in his sleep. The other peahens came no nearer, but stood weeping silently. She looked from him to them. "O," she cried, "I have a wicked heart, to let one stand in the way of nine!" Then she threw up her neck and cried lamentably with her peafowl's voice, wishing that the Prince would wake up and see her, and so escape. And at that all the other peahens lifted up their heads and wailed with her: but the Prince never turned, nor lifted a finger, nor uttered a sound.

Then she drew in a deep breath, and closed her eyes fast. "Let my sisters go, but let me be as I am!" she cried; and with that she stooped down, and pecked out his heart.

All her sisters shrieked as their human shapes returned to them. "O, sister! O, wicked little sister!" they cried, "What have you done?"

The little white peahen crouched close down to the side of the dead Prince. "I loved him more than you all!" she tried to say: but she only lifted her head, and wailed again and again the peafowl's cry.

The Prince's heart lay beating at her feet, so glad to be rid of its nine sorrows that mere joy made it live on, though all the rest of the body lay cold.

The peahen leaned down upon the Prince's breast, and there wailed without ceasing: then suddenly, piercing with her beak her own breast, she drew out her own living heart and laid it in the place where his had been.

And, as she did so, the wound where she had pierced him closed and became healed; and her heart was, as it were, buried in the Prince's breast. In her death agony she could feel it there, her own heart leaping within his breast for joy.

The Prince, who had seemed to be dead, flushed from head to foot as the warmth of life came back to him; with one deep breath he woke, and found the little white peahen lying as if dead between his arms.

Then he laughed softly and rose (his goodness making him wise), and taking up his own still beating heart he laid it into the place of hers. At the first beat of it within her breast, the peahen became transformed as all her sisters had been, and her own human form came back to her. And the pain and the wound in her breast grew healed together, so that she stood up alive and well in the Prince's arms.

"Dear heart!" said he: and "Dear, dear heart!" said she; but whether they were speaking of their own hearts or of each other's, who can tell? for which was which they themselves did not know.

Then all round was so much embracing and happiness that it is out of reach for tongue or pen to describe. For truly the Prince and his foster-sisters

loved each other well, and could put no bounds upon their present contentment. As for the Prince and the one who had plucked out his heart, of no two was the saying ever more truly told that they had lost their hearts to each other; nor was ever love in the world known before that carried with it such harmony as theirs.

And so it all came about according to the Queen's dream, that the forester's daughter wore the royal crown upon her head, and held the Prince's heart in her hand.

Long before he died the old King was made happy because the dream he had so much feared had become true. And the forester's wife was happy before she died. And as for the Prince and his wife and his foster-sisters, they were all rather happy; and none of them is dead yet.

HOW LITTLE DUKE JARL SAVED THE CASTLE

DUKE JARL had found a good roost for himself when his long work of expelling the invader was ended. Seawards and below the town, in the mouth of the river, stood a rock, thrusting out like a great tusk ready to rip up any armed vessel that sought passage that way. On the top of this he had built himself a castle, and its roots went deep, deep down into the solid stone. No man knew how deep the deepest of the foundations went; but wherever they were, just there was old Duke Jarl's sleeping-chamber. Thither he had gone to sleep when the world no longer needed him; and he had not yet returned.

That was three hundred years ago, and still the solid rock vaulted the old warrior's slumber; and over his head men talked of him, and told how he was reserving the strength of his old age till his country should again call for him.

The call seemed to come now; for his descendant, little Duke Jarl the Ninth, was but a child; and being in no fear of him, the invader had returned, and the castle stood besieged. Also, farther than the eye could see from the topmost tower, the land lay all overrun, its richness laid waste by armed bands who gathered in its harvest by the sword, and the town itself lay under tribute; from the tower one could see the busy quays, and the enemy loading his ships with rich merchandise.

Sent up there to play in safety, little Duke Jarl could not keep his red head from peering over the parapet. He began making fierce faces at the enemy —he was still too young to fight : and quick a grey goose-shaft came and sang its shrill song at his ear. So close had it gone that a little of the ducal blood trickled out over his collar. His face worked with rage ; leaning far out over the barrier, he began shouting, " I will tell Duke Jarl of you ! " till an attendant ran up and snatched him away from danger.

Things were going badly : the castle was cut off from the land, and on the seaward side the foe had built themselves a great mole within which their warships could ride at anchor safe from the reach of storm. Thus there was no way left by which help or provender could come in.

Little Duke Jarl saw men round him growing more gaunt and thin day by day, but he did not understand why, till he chanced once upon a soldier gnawing a foul bone for the stray bits of meat that clung to it ; then he learned that all in the castle except himself had been put upon quarter-rations, though every day there was more and more fighting work to be done.

So that day when the usual white bread and savouries were brought to him, he flung them all downstairs, telling the cook that the day he really became Duke he would have his head off if he ever dared to send him anything again but the common fare.

Hearing of it, the old Chief Constable picked up little Master Ninth Duke between finger and thumb, and laughed, holding him in the air.

" With you alive," said he, " we shall not have to wake Duke Jarl after all ! " The little Duke asked when he would let him have a sword ; and the Constable clapped his cheeks and ran back cheerfully at a call from the palisades.

But others carried heavy looks, thinking, " Long before his fair promise can come to anything our larders will be empty and our walls gone ! "

It was no great time after this that the Duke's Constable was the only man who saw reason in holding out. That became known all through the castle, and the cook, honest fellow, brought up little Jarl's dinner one day with tears in his eyes. He set down his load of dainties. " It is no use ! " said he, " you may as well eat to-day, since to-morrow we give up the castle."

" Who dares to say ' we ' ? " cried little Duke Jarl, springing to his feet.

" All but the Constable," said the cook ; " even now they are in the council-hall, trying to make him see reason. Whether or no, they will not let him hold on."

Little Jarl found the doors of the great hall barred to the thunderings of his small fist : for, in truth, these men could not bear to look upon one who had in his veins the blood of old Duke Jarl, when they were about to give up his stronghold to the enemy.

So little Jarl made his way up to the bowery, where was a minstrel's window looking down into the hall. Sticking out his head so that he might see down to where the council was sitting, " If you give up the castle, I will tell Duke Jarl ! " he cried.

Hearing his young master's voice, the Constable raised his eyes; but not able to see him for tears in them, called out: "Tell him quick, for here it is all against one! Only for one day more have they promised to follow my bidding, and keep the carrion crows from coming to Jarl's nest."

And even as he spoke came the renewed cry of attack, and the answering shout of "Jarl, Jarl!" from the defenders upon the walls. Then all leapt up, overturning the council-board, and ran out to the battlements to carry on with what courage was left to them a hopeless contest for one more day.

Little Duke Jarl remained like a beating heart in the great empty keep. He ran wildly from room to room, calling in rage and desperation on old Jarl to return and fight. From roof to basement he ran, commanding the spirit of his ancestor to appear, till at last he found himself in the deepest cellars of all. Down there he could hear but faintly the sound of the fighting; yet it seemed to him that through the stone he could hear the slow booming of the sea, and as he went deeper into the castle's foundations the louder had grown its note. "Does the sea come in all the way under the castle?" he wondered. "Oh that it would sap the foundations and sink castle and all, rather than let them give up old Jarl's stronghold to his enemies!"

All was quite dark here, where the castle stood embedded; but now and then little Duke Jarl could feel a puff of wind on his face, and presently he was noticing how it came, as if timed to the booming of the sea underneath: whenever came the sound of a breaking wave, with it came a

draught of air. He wondered if, so low down, there might not be some secret opening to the shore.

Groping in the direction of the gusts, his feet came upon stairs. So low and narrow was the entrance, he had to turn sideways and stoop; but when he had burrowed through a thickness of wall he was able to stand upright; and again he found stairs leading somewhere.

Down, these led down. He had never been so low before. And what a storm there must be outside! Against these walls the thunders of the sea grew so loud he could no longer hear the tramp of his own feet descending.

And now the wind came at him in great gusts; first came the great boom of the sea, and then a blast of air. The way twisted and circled, making his head giddy for a fall; his feet slipped on the steepness and slime of the descent, and at each turn the sound grew more appalling, and the driving force of the wind more and more like the stroke of a man's fist.

Presently the shock of it threw him from his standing, so that he had to lie down and slide feet foremost, clinging with his eyelids and nails to break the violence of his descent. And now the air was so full of thunder that his teeth shook in their sockets, and his bones jarred in his flesh. The darkness growled and roared; the wind kept lifting him backwards—the force of it seemed almost to flay the skin off his face; and still he went on, throwing his full weight against the air ahead.

Then for a moment he felt himself letting go

altogether: solid walls slipping harshly past him in the darkness, he fell; and came headlong, crashed and bruised, to a standstill.

At first his brain was all in a mist; then, raising himself, he saw a dim blue light falling through a low vaulted chamber. At the end of it sat old Jarl, like adamant in slumber. His head was down on his breast, buried in a great burning bush of hair and beard; his hands, gripping the arms of his iron throne, had twisted them like wire; and the weight of his feet where they rested had hollowed a socket in the stone floor for them to sink into.

All his hair and his armour shone with a red-and-blue flame; and the light of him struck the vaulting and the floor like the rays of a torch as it burns. Over his head a dark tunnel, bored in the solid rock, reached up a hollow throat seawards. But not by that way came the wind and the sound of the sea; it was old Jarl himself, breathing peacefully in his sleep, waiting for the hour which should call his strength to life.

Young Duke Jarl ran swiftly across the chamber, and struck old Jarl's knees, crying, "Wake, Jarl! or the castle will be taken!" But the sleeper did not stir. Then he climbed the iron bars of the Duke's chair, and reaching high, caught hold of the red beard. "Forefather!" he cried, "wake, or the castle will be betrayed!"

But still old Duke Jarl snored a drowsy hurricane.

Then little Jarl sprang upon his knee, and seizing him by the head, pulled to move its dead

weight, and finding he could not, struck him ful on the mouth, crying, "Jarl, Jarl, old thunderbolt! wake, or you will betray the castle!"

At that old Jarl hitched himself in his seat, and "Humph!" cried he, drawing in a deep breath.

In rushed the wind whistling from the sea, and all down the way by which little Duke Jarl had come; like the wings of cranes flying homewards in spring, so it whistled when old Jarl drew in his breath.

Off his knee dropped little Ninth Jarl, buffeted speechless to earth. And old Jarl, letting go a breath, settled himself back to slumber.

Far up overhead, at the darkening-in of night, the besiegers saw the eyes of the castle flash red for an instant, and shut again; then they heard the castle-rock bray out like a great trumpet, and they trembled, crying, "That is old Jarl's warhorn; he is awake out of slumber!"

They had reason enough to fear; for suddenly upon their ships-of-war there crashed, as though out of the bowels of the earth, wind and a black sandblast; and coming, it took the reefed sails and rigging, and snapped the masts and broke every vessel from its moorings, and drove all to wreck and ruin against the great mole that had been built to shelter them.

And away inland, beyond the palisades and under the entrenched camp of the besiegers, the ground pitched and rocked, so that every tent fell grovelling; and whenever the ground gaped, captains and men-at-arms were swallowed down in detachments.

Hardly had the call of old Jarl's warhorn ceased,

before the Constable commanded the castle gates to be thrown open, and out he came leading a gaunt and hungry band of Jarl-folk warriors; for over in the enemy's camp they had scent of a hot supper which must be cooked and eaten before dawn. And in a little while, when the cooking was at its height, young Duke Jarl stuck his red head out over the battlements, and laughed.

So this has told how old Duke Jarl once turned and talked in his sleep; but to tell of the real awakening of old Jarl would be quite another story.

A CAPFUL OF MOONSHINE

ON the top of Drundle Head, away to the right, where the foot-track crossed, it was known that the fairies still came and danced by night. But though Toonie went that way every evening on his road home from work, never once had he been able to spy them.

So one day he said to the old faggot-maker, "How is it that one gets to see a fairy?" The old man answered, "There are some to whom it comes by nature; but for others three things are needed—a handful of courage, a mouthful of silence, and a capful of moonshine. But if you would be trying it, take care that you don't go wrong once too often; for with the third time you will fall into the hands of the fairies and be their bondsman. But if you manage to see the fairies, you may ask whatever you like of them."

Toonie believed in himself so much that the very next night he took his courage in both hands, filled his cap with moonshine, shut his mouth, and set out.

Just after he had started he passed, as he thought, a priest riding by on a mule. "Good evening to you, Toonie," called the priest.

"Good evening, your reverence," cried Toonie, and flourished off his cap, so that out fell his capful of moonshine. And though he went on all the way up over the top of Drundle Head, never a fairy did he spy; for he forgot that, in passing what he supposed to be the priest, he had let go

both his mouthful of silence and his capful of moonshine.

The next night, when he was coming to the ascent of the hill, he saw a little elderly man wandering uncertainly over the ground ahead of him; and he too seemed to have his hands full of courage and his cap full of moonshine. As Toonie drew near, the other turned about and said to him, "Can you tell me, neighbour, if this be the way to the fairies?"

"Why, you fool," cried Toonie, "a moment ago it was! But now you have gone and let go your mouthful of silence!"

"To be sure, to be sure—so I have!" answered the old man sadly; and turning about, he disappeared among the bushes.

As for Toonie, he went on right over the top of Drundle Head, keeping his eyes well to the right; but never a fairy did he see. For he too had on the way let go his mouthful of silence.

Toonie, when his second failure came home to him, was quite vexed with himself for his folly and mismanagement. So that it should not happen again, he got his wife to tie on his cap of moonshine so firmly that it could not come off, and to gag up his mouth so that no word could come out of it. And once more taking his courage in both hands, he set out.

For a long way he went and nothing happened, so he was in good hopes of getting the desire of his eyes before the night was over; and, clenching his fists tight upon his courage, he pressed on.

He had nearly reached to the top of Drundle Head, when up from the ground sprang the same

little elderly man of the evening before, and began beating him across the face with a hazel wand. And at that Toonie threw up both hands and let go his courage, and turned and tried to run down the hill.

When her husband did not return, Toonie's wife became a kind of a widow. People were very kind to her, and told her that Toonie was not dead—that he had only fallen into the hands of the good-folk; but all day long she sat and cried, "I fastened on his cap of moonshine, and I tied up his tongue; and for all that he has gone away and left me!" And so she cried until her child was born and named little Toonie in memory of his lost father.

After a while people, looking at him, began to shake their heads; for as he grew older it became apparent that his tongue was tied, seeing that he remained quite dumb in spite of all that was done to teach him; and his head was full of moonshine, so that he could understand nothing clearly by day—only as night came on his wits gathered, and he seemed to find a meaning for things. And some said it was his mother's fault, and some that it was his father's, and some that he was a changeling sent by the fairies, and that the real child had been taken to share his father's bondage. But which of these things was true Little Toonie himself had no idea.

After a time Little Toonie began to grow big, as is the way with children, and at last he became bigger than ever old Toonie had been. But folk still called him Little Toonie, because his head was so full of moonshine; and his mother, finding he was no good to her, sold him to the farmer, by whom, since he had no wits for anything better, he was set to pull

at waggon and plough just as if he were a cart-horse; and, indeed, he was almost as strong as one. To make him work, carter and ploughman used to crack their whips over his back; and Little Toonie took it as the most natural thing in the world, because his brain was full of moonshine, so that he understood nothing clearly by day.

But at night he would lie in his stable among the horses, and wonder about the moonlight that stretched wide over all the world and lay free on the bare tops of the hills; and he thought—would it not be good to be there all alone, with the moon-beams laying their white hands down on his head? And so it came that one night, finding the door of his stable unlocked, he ran out into the open world a free man.

A soft wind breathed at large, and swung slowly in the black-silver treetops. Over them Little Toonie could see the quiet slopes of Drundle Head, asleep in the moonlight.

Before long, following the lead of his eyes, he had come to the bottom of the ascent. There before him went walking a little shrivelled elderly man, looking to right and left as if uncertain of the road.

As Little Toonie drew near, the other one turned and spoke. "Can you tell me," said he, "if this be the way to the fairies?"

Little Toonie had no tongue to give an answer; so, looking at his questioner, he wagged his head and went on.

Quickening his pace, the old man came alongside and began peering; then he smiled to himself,

and after a bit spoke out. "So you have lost your cap, neighbour? Then you will never be able to find the fairies." For he did not know that Little Toonie, who wore no cap on his head, carried his capful of moonshine safe underneath his skull, where it had been since the hour of his birth.

The little elderly man slipped from his side, disappearing suddenly among the bushes, and Toonie went on alone. So presently he was more than half way up the ascent, and could see along the foot-track of the thicket the silver moonlight lying out over the open ahead.

He had nearly reached to the top of the hill, when up from the ground sprang the little elderly man, and began beating him across the face with a hazel wand. Toonie thought surely this must be some carter or ploughman beating him to make him go faster; so he made haste to get on and be rid of the blows.

Then, all of a sudden, the little elderly man threw away his hazel stick, and fell down, clutching at Little Toonie's ankles, whining and praying him not to go on.

"Now that I have failed to keep you from coming," he cried, "my masters will put me to death for it! I am a dead man, I tell you, if you go another step!"

Toonie could not understand what the old fellow meant, and he could not speak to him. But the poor creature clung to his feet, holding them to prevent him from taking another step; so Toonie just stooped down, and (for he was so little and light) picked him up by the scruff, and by the slack of his

breeches, so that his arms and legs trailed together along the ground.

In the open moonlight ahead little people were all agog; bright dewdrops were shivering down like rain, where flying feet alighted—shot from bent grass-blades like arrows from a drawn bow. Tight, panting little bodies, of which one could count the ribs, and faces flushed with fiery green blood, sprang everywhere. But at Toonie's coming one cried up shriller than a bat; and at once rippling burrows went this way and that in the long grass, and stillness followed after.

The poor, dangling old man, whom Toonie was still carrying, wriggled and whined miserably, crying, "Come back, masters, for it is no use—this one sees you! He has got past me and all my poor skill to stop him. Set me free, for you see I am too old to keep the door for you any longer!"

Out buzzed the fairies, hot and angry as a swarm of bees. They came and fastened upon the unhappy old man, and began pulling him. "To the ant-hills!" they cried; "off with him to the ant-hills!" But when they found that Toonie still held him, quickly they all let go.

One fairy, standing out from the rest, pulled off his cap and bowed low. "What is your will, master mortal?" he inquired; "for until you have taken your wish and gone, we are all slaves at your bidding."

They all cringed round him, the cruel little people; but he answered nothing. The moonbeams came thick, laying their slender white palms

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graciously upon Toonie's head; and he, looking up, opened his mouth for a laugh that gave no sound.

"Ah, so! That is why—he is a mute!" cried the fairies.

Quickly one dipped his cap along the grass and brought it filled with dew. He sprang up, and poured it upon Toonie's tongue; and as the fairy dew touched it, "Now speak!" they all cried in chorus, and fawned and cringed, waiting for him to give them the word.

Cudgelling his brain for what it all meant, he said, "Tell me first what wish I may have."

"Whatever you like to ask," said they, "for you have become one of our free men. Tell us your name?"

"I am called Little Toonie," said he, "the son of old Toonie that was lost."

"Why, as I live and remember," cried the little elderly man, "old Toonie was me!" Then he threw himself grovelling at his son's feet, and began crying: "Oh, be quick and take me away! Make them give me up to you: ask to have me! I am your poor, loving old father whom you never saw; all these years have I been looking and longing for you! Now take me away, for they are a proud, cruel people, as spiteful as they are small; and my back has been broken twenty years in their bondage."

The fairies began to look blue, for they hate nothing so much as to give up one whom they have once held captive. "We can give you gold," said they, "or precious stones, or the root of long living, or the waters of happiness, or the sap of youth, or

the seed of plenty, or the blossom of beauty. Choose any of these, and we can give it you."

The old man again caught hold of his son's feet. "Don't choose these," he whimpered, "choose me!"

So because he had a capful of moonshine in his head, and because the moonbeams were laying their white hands on his hair, he chose the weak, shrivelled old man, who crouched and clung to him, imploring not to be let go.

The fairies, for spite and anger, bestowed every one a parting pinch on their tumbledown old bondsman; then they handed him to his son, and swung back with careless light hearts to their revels.

As father and son went down the hill together, the old man whistled and piped like a bird. "Why, why!" he said, "you are a lad of strength and inches: with you to work and look after me, I can keep on to a merry old age! Ay, ay, I have had long to wait for it; but wisdom is justified in her children."

THE STORY OF THE HERONS

A LONG time ago there lived a King and a Queen who loved each other dearly. They had both fallen in love at first sight; and as their love began so it went on through all their life. Yet this, which was the cause of all their happiness, was the cause also of all their misfortunes.

In his youth, when he was a beautiful young bachelor, the King had had the ill-luck to attract the heart of a jealous and powerful Fairy; and though he never gave her the least hope or encouragement, when she heard that his love had been won at first sight by a mere mortal, her rage and resentment knew no bounds. She said nothing, however, but bided her time.

After they had been married a year the Queen presented her husband with a little daughter; before she was yet a day old she was the most beautiful object in the world, and life seemed to promise her nothing but fortune and happiness.

The family Fairy came to the blessing of the new-born; and she, looking at it as it lay beautifully asleep in its cradle, and seeing that it had already as much beauty and health as the heart could desire, promised it love as the next best gift it was within her power to offer. The Queen, who knew how much happiness her own love had brought her, was kissing the good Fairy with all the warmth of gratitude, when a black kite came

and perched upon the window-sill crying: "And I will give her love at first sight! The first living thing that she sets eyes on she shall love to distraction, whether it be man or monster, prince or pauper, bird, beast or reptile." And as the wicked Fairy spoke she clapped her wings, and up through the boards of the floor, and out from under the bed, and in through the window, came a crowd of all the ugliest shapes in the world. Thick and fast they came, gathering about the cradle and lifting their heads over the edge of it, waiting for the poor little Princess to wake up and fall in love at first sight with one of them.

Luckily the child was asleep; and the good Fairy, after driving away the black kite and the crowd of beasts it had called to its aid, wrapped the Princess up in a shawl and carried her away to a dark room where no glimmer of light could get in.

She said to the Queen: "Till I can devise a better way, you must keep her in the dark; and when you take her into the open air you must blindfold her eyes. Some day, when she is of a fit age, I will bring a handsome Prince for her; and only to him shall you unblindfold her at last, and make love safe for her."

She went, leaving the King and Queen deeply stricken with grief over the harm which had befallen their daughter. They did not dare to present even themselves before her eyes lest love for them, fatal and consuming, should drive her to distraction. In utter darkness the Queen would sit and cherish her daughter, clasping her to her breast, and calling her by all sweet names; but the little

face, except by stealth when it was sound asleep, she never dared to see, nor did the baby-Princess know the face of the mother who loved her.

By and by, however, the family Fairy came again, saying : " Now, I have a plan by which your child may enjoy the delights of seeing, and no ill come of it." And she caused to be made a large chamber, the whole of one side of which was a mirror. High up in the opposite wall were windows so screened that from below no one could look out of them, but across on to the mirror came all the sweet sights of the world, glimpses of wood and field, and the sun and the moon and the stars, and of every bird as it flew by. So the little Princess was brought and set in a screened place looking towards the mirror, and there her eyes learned gradually all the beautiful things of the world. Over the screen, in the glass before her, she learned to know her mother's face, and to love it dearly in a gentle child-like fashion ; and when she could talk she became very wise, understanding all that was told her about the danger of looking at anything alive, except by its reflection in the glass.

When she went out into the open air for her health, she always wore a bandage over her eyes, lest she should look, and love something too well : but in the chamber of the mirror her eyes were free to see whatever they could. The good Fairy, making herself invisible, came and taught her to read and make music, and draw ; so that before she was fifteen she was the most charming and accomplished, as well as the most beautiful Princess of her day.

At last the Fairy said that the time was come for her world of reflections to be made real, and she went away to fetch the ideal Prince that the Princess might at first sight fall in love with him.

The very day after she was gone, as the morning was fine, the Princess went out with one of her maids for a walk through the woods. Over her patient eyes she wore a bandage of green silk, through which she felt the sunlight fall pleasantly.

Out of doors the Princess knew most things by their sounds. She passed under rustling leaves, and along by the side of running water; and at last she heard the silence of the water, and knew that she was standing by the great fish-pond in the middle of the wood. Then she said to her waiting-woman, "Is there not some great bird fishing out there, for I hear the dipping of his bill, and the water falling off it as he draws out the fish?"

And just as she was saying that, the wicked Fairy, who had long bided her time, coming softly up from behind, pushed the waiting-woman off the bank into the deep water of the pond. Then she snatched away the silk bandage, and before the Princess had time to think or close her eyes, she had lost her heart to a great heron that was standing half-way up to his feathers fishing among the reeds.

The Princess, with her eyes set free, laughed for joy at the sight of him. She stretched out her arms from the bank and cried most musically for the bird to come to her; and he came in grave, stately fashion, with trailing legs, and slow sobbing creak of his wings, and settled down on the bank beside her. She drew his slender neck against her white

throat, and laughed and cried with her arms round him, loving him so that she forgot all in the world beside. And the heron looked gravely at her with kind eyes, and, bird-like, gave her all the love he could, but not more; and so, presently, casting his grey wings abroad, lifted himself and sailed slowly back to his fishing among the reeds.

The waiting-woman had got herself out of the water, and stood wringing her clothes and her hands beside the Princess. "O, sweet mistress," she cried, with lamentation, "now is all the evil come about which it was our whole aim to avoid! And what, and what will the Queen your mother say?"

But the Princess answered, smiling, "Foolish girl, I had no thought of what happiness meant till now! See you where my love is gone? and did you notice the bend of his neck, and the exceeding length of his legs, and the stretch of his grey wings as he flew? This pond is his hall of mirrors, wherein he sees the reflection of all his world. Surely I, from my hall of mirrors, am the true mate for him!"

Her maid, seeing how far the evil had gone, and that no worse could now happen, ran back to the palace and curdled all the court's blood with her news. The King and the Queen and all their nobility rushed down, and there they found the Princess with the heron once more in her arms, kissing and fondling it with all the marks of a sweet and maidenly passion. "Dear mother," she said, as soon as she saw the Queen, "the happiness, which you feared would be sorrow, has come; and it is such happiness I have no name for it! And the evil that you so dreaded, see how sweet it is! And

how sweet it is to see all the world with my own eyes and you also at last!" And for the first time in her life she kissed her mother's face in the full light of day.

But her mother hung sobbing upon her neck, "O, my darling, my beautiful," she wept, "does your heart belong for ever to this grey bird?"

Her daughter answered, "He is more than all the world to me! Is he not goodly to look upon? Have you considered the bend of his neck, the length of his legs, and the waving of his wings; his skill also when he fishes: what imagination, what presence of mind!"

"Alas, alas," sorrowed the Queen, "dear daughter, is this all true to you?"

"Mother," cried the Princess, clinging to her with entreaty, "is all the world blind but me?"

The heron had become quite fond of the Princess; wherever she went it followed her, and, indeed, without it nowhere would she go. Whenever it was near her, the Princess laughed and sang, and when it was out of her sight she became sad as night. All the courtiers wept to see her in such bondage. "Ah," said she, "your eyes have been worn out with looking at things so long; mine have been kept for me in a mirror."

When the good family Fairy came (for she was at once sent for by the Queen, and told of all that had happened), she said, "Dear Madam, there are but two things you can do: either you can wring the heron's neck, and leave the Princess to die of grief; or you can make the Princess happy in her own way, by——" Her voice dropped, and she looked from

the King to the Queen before she went on. "At her birth I gave your daughter love for my gift; now it is hers, will you let her keep it?"

The King and the Queen looked softly at each other. "Do not take love from her," said they, "let her keep it!"

"There is but one way," answered the Fairy.

"Do not tell me the way," said the Queen weeping, "only let the way be!"

So they went with the Fairy down to the great pond, and there sat the Princess, with the grey heron against her heart. She smiled as she saw them come. "I see good in your hearts towards me!" she cried. "Dear godmother, give me the thing that I want, that my love may be happy!"

Then the Fairy stroked her but once with her wand, and two grey herons suddenly rose up from the bank, and sailed away to a hiding-place in the reeds.

The Fairy said to the Queen, "You have made your daughter happy; and still she will have her voice and her human heart, and will remember you with love and gratitude; but her greatest love will be to the grey heron, and her home among the reeds."

So the changed life of the Princess began; every day her mother went down to the pool and called, and the Princess came rising up out of the reeds, and folded her grey wings over her mother's heart. Every day her mother said, "Daughter of mine, are you happy?"

And the Princess answered her, "Yes, for I love and am loved."

Yet each time the mother heard more and more of a note of sadness come into her daughter's voice;

and at last one day she said, " Answer me truly, as the mother who brought you into the world, whether you be happy in your heart of hearts or no ? "

Then the heron-Princess laid her head on the Queen's heart, and said, " Mother, my heart is breaking with love ! "

" For whom, then ? " asked the Queen astonished.

" For my grey heron, whom I love, and who loves me so much. And yet it is love that divides us, for I am still troubled with a human heart, and often it aches with sorrow because all the love in it can never be fully understood or shared by my heron ; and I have my human voice left, and that gives me a hundred things to say all day, for which there is no word in heron's language, and so he cannot understand them. Therefore these things only make a gulf between him and me. For all the other grey herons in the pools there is happiness, but not for me who have too big a heart between my wings."

Her mother said softly, " Wait, wait, little heron-daughter, and it shall be well with you ! " Then she went to the Fairy and said, " My daughter's heart is lonely among the reeds, for the grey heron's love covers but half of it. Give her some companions of her own kind that her hours may become merry again ! "

So the Fairy took and turned five of the Princess's ladies'-maids into herons, and sent them down to the pool.

The five herons stood each on one leg in the shallows of the pool, and cried all day long ; and their tears fell down into the water and frightened away the fish that came their way. For they had human

hearts that cried out to be let go. " O, cruel, cruel," they wept, whenever the heron-Princess approached, " see what we suffer because of you, and what they have made of us for your sake ! "

The Princess came to her mother and said, " Dear mother, take them away, for their cry wearies me, and the pool is bitter with their tears ! They only awake the human part of my heart that wants to sleep ; presently, maybe, if it is let alone, it will forget itself."

Her mother said, " It is my coming every day also that keeps it awake." The Princess answered, " This sorrow belongs to my birthright ; you must still come ; but for the others, let the Fairy take them away."

So the Fairy came and released the five ladies'-maids whom she had changed into herons. And they came up out of the water, stripping themselves of their grey feather-skins and throwing them back into the pool. The Fairy said, " You foolish maids, you have thrown away a gift that you should have valued ; these skins you could have kept and held as heirlooms in your family."

The five maids answered, " We want to forget that there are such things as herons in the world ! "

After much thought the Queen said to the Fairy, " You have changed a Princess into a heron, and five maids into herons and back again ; cannot you change one heron into a Prince ? " But the Fairy answered sadly, " Our power has limits ; we can bring down, but we cannot bring up, if there be no heart to answer our call. The five maids only followed their hearts, that were human, when I

called them back; but a heron has only a heron's heart, and unless his heart become too great for a bird and he earn a human one, I cannot change him to a higher form." "How can he earn a human one?" asked the Queen. "Only if he love the Princess so well that his love for her becomes stronger than his life," answered the Fairy. "Then he will have earned a human body, and then I can give him the form that his heart suits best. There may be a chance, if we wait for it and are patient, for the Princess's love is great and may work miracles."

A little while after this, the Queen watching, saw that the two herons were making a nest among the reeds. "What have you there?" said the mother to her daughter. "A little hollow place," answered the heron-Princess, "and in it the moon lies." A little while after she said again, "What have you there, now, little daughter?" And her daughter answered, "Only a small hollow space; but in it two moons lie."

The Queen told the family Fairy how in a hollow of the reeds lay two moons. "Now," said the Fairy, "we will wait no longer. If your daughter's love has touched the heron's heart and made it grow larger than a bird's, I can help them both to happiness; but if not, then birds they must still remain."

Among the reeds the heron said in bird language to his wife, "Go and stretch your wings for a little while over the water; it is weary work to wait here so long in the reeds." The heron-Princess looked at him with her bird's eyes, and all the human love in her heart strove, like a fountain that could not get free, to make itself known through them; also

her tongue was full of the longing to utter sweet words, but she kept them back, knowing they were beyond the heron's power to understand. So she answered merely in heron's language, " Come with me, and I will come ! "

They rose, wing beating beside wing ; and the reflection of their grey breasts slid out under them over the face of the water.

Higher they went and higher, passing over the tree tops, and keeping time together as they flew. All at once the wings of the grey heron flagged, then took a deep beat ; he cried to the heron-Princess, " Turn, and come home, yonder there is danger flying to meet us ! " Before them hung a brown blot in the air, that winged and grew large. The two herons turned and flew back. " Rise," cried the grey heron, " we must rise ! " and the Princess knew what was behind, and struggled with the whole strength of her wings for escape.

The grey heron was bearing ahead on stronger wing. " With me, with me ! " he cried. " If it gets above us, one of us is dead ! " But the falcon had fixed his eye on the Princess for his quarry, and flew she fast, or flew she slow, there was little chance for her now. Up and up she strained, but still she was behind her mate, and still the falcon gained.

The heron swung back to her side ; she saw the anguish and fear of his downward glance as his head ranged by hers. Past her the falcon went, towering for the final swoop.

The Princess cried in heron's language, " Farewell, dear mate, and farewell, two little moons

among the reeds!" But the grey heron only kept closer to her side.

Overhead the falcon closed in its wings and fell like a dead weight out of the clouds. "Drop!" cried the grey heron to his mate.

At his word she dropped; but he stayed, stretching up his wings, and, passing between the descending falcon and its prey, caught in his own body the death-blow from its beak. Drops of his blood fell upon the heron-Princess.

He stricken in body, she in soul, together they fell down to the margin of the pool. The falcon still clung fleshing its beak in the neck of its prey. The heron-Princess threw back her head, and, darting furiously, struck her own sharp bill deep into the falcon's breast. The bird threw out its wings with a hoarse cry and fell back dead, with a little tuft of the grey heron's feathers still upon its beak.

The heron-Princess crouched down, and covered with her wings the dying form of her mate; in her sorrow she spoke to him in her own tongue, forgetting her bird's language. The grey heron lifted his head, and, gazing tenderly, answered her with a human voice:

"Dear wife," he said, "at last I have the happiness so long denied to me of giving utterance in the speech that is your own to the love that you have put into my heart. Often I have heard you speak and have not understood; now something has touched my heart, and changed it, so that I can both speak and understand."

"O, beloved!" She laid her head down by his.

"The ends of the world belong to us now. Lie down, and die gently by my side, and I will die with you, breaking my heart with happiness."

"No," said the grey heron, "do not die yet! Remember the two little moons that lie in the hollow among the reeds." Then he laid his head down by hers, being too weak to say more.

They folded their wings over each other, and closed their eyes; nor did they know that the Fairy was standing by them, till she stroked them both softly with her wand, saying to each of them the same words:

"Human heart, and human form, come out of the grey heron!"

And out of the grey heron-skins came two human forms; the one was the Princess restored again to her own shape, but the other was a beautiful youth, with a bird-like look about the eyes, and long slender limbs. The Princess, as she gazed on him, found hardly any change, for love remained the same, binding him close to her heart; and, grey heron or beautiful youth, he was all one to her now.

Then came the Queen, weeping for joy, and embracing them both, and after them, the Fairy. "O, how good an ending," she cried, "has come to that terrible dream! Let it never be remembered or mentioned between us more!" And she began to lead the way back to the palace.

But the youth, to whom the Fairy gave the name of Prince Heron, turned and took up the two heron-skins which he and his wife had let fall, and followed, carrying them upon his arm. And as

they came past the bed of reeds, the Princess went aside, and, stooping down in a certain place drew out from thence something which she came carrying, softly wrapped in the folds of her gown.

With what rejoicing the Princess and her husband were welcomed by the King and all the Court needs not to be told. For a whole month the festivities continued; and whenever she showed herself, there was the Princess sitting with two eggs in her lap, and her hands over them to keep them warm. The King was impatient. "Why cannot you send them down to the poultry yard to be hatched?" he said.

But the Princess replied smiling, "My moons are my own, and I will keep them to myself."

"Do you hear?" she said one day, at last; and everybody who listened could hear something going "tap, tap," inside the shells. Presently the eggs cracked, and out of each, at the same moment, came a little grey heron.

When she saw that they were herons, the Queen wrung her hands. "O Fairy," she cried, "what a disappointment is this! I had hoped two beautiful babies would have come out of those shells."

But the Fairy said, "It is no matter. Half of their hearts are human already; birds' hearts do not beat so. If you wish it, I can change them." So she stroked them softly with her wand, saying to each, "Human heart, and human form, come out of the grey heron!"

Yet she had to stroke them three times before they would turn; and she said to the Princess,

" My dear, you were too satisfied with your lot when you laid you moon-children I doubt if more than a quarter of them is human."

" I was very satisfied," said the Princess, and she laughed across to her husband.

At last, however, on the third stroke of the wand, the heron's skins dropped off, and they changed into a pair of very small babies, a boy and a girl. But the difference between them and other children was, that instead of hair, their heads were covered with a fluff of downy grey feathers ; also they had queer, round, bird-like eyes, and were able to sleep standing.

Now, after this the happiness of the Princess was great ; but the Fairy said to her, " Do not let your husband see the heron-skins again for some while, lest with the memory a longing for his old life should return to him and take him away from you. Only by exchange with another can he ever get back his human form again, if he surrenders it of his own free will. And who is there so poor that he would willingly give up his human form to become a bird ? "

So the Princess took the four coats of feathers—her own and her husband's and her two children's —and hid them away in a closet of which she alone kept the key. It was a little gold key, and to make it safe she hung it about her neck, and wore it night and day.

The Prince said to her, " What is that little key that you wear always hung round your neck ? "

She answered him, " It is the key to your happiness and mine. Do not ask more than that ! "

At that there was a look in his face that made her say, "You *are* happy, are you not?"

He kissed her, saying, "Happy, indeed! Have I not you to make me so?" Yet though, indeed, he told no untruth, and was happy whenever she was with him, there were times when a restlessness and a longing for wings took hold of him; for, as yet, the life of a man was new and half strange to him, and a taint of his old life still mixed itself with his blood. But to her he was ashamed to say what might seem a complaint against his great fortune; so when she said "happiness," he thought, "Is it just the turning of that key that I want before my happiness can be perfect?"

Therefore, one night when the early season of spring made his longing strong in him, he took the key from the Princess while she slept, and opened the little closet in which hung the four feather coats. And when he saw his own, all at once he remembered the great pools of water, and how they lay in the shine and shadow of the moonlight, while the fish rose in rings upon their surface. And at that so great a longing came into him to revisit his old haunts that he reached out his hand and took down the heron-skin from its nail and put it over himself; so that immediately his old life took hold of him, and he flew out of the window in the form of a grey heron.

In the morning the Princess found the key gone from her neck, and her husband's place empty. She went in haste to the closet, and there stood the door wide with the key in it, and only three heron-skins hanging where four had used to be.

Then she came crying to the family Fairy, " My husband has taken his heron-skin and is gone! Tell me what I can do ! "

The Fairy pitied her with all her heart, but could do nothing. " Only by exchange," said she, " can he get back his human shape; and who is there so poor that he would willingly lose his own form to become a bird ? Only your children, who are but half human, can put their heron-skins on and off as they like and when they like."

In deep grief the Princess went to look for her husband down by the pools in the wood. But now his shame and sorrow at having deceived her were so great that as soon as he heard her voice he hid himself among the reeds, for he knew now that, having put on his heron-skin again, he could not take it off unless some one gave him a human form in exchange.

At last, however, so pitiful was the cry of the Princess for him, that he could bear to hear it no more; but rising up from the reeds came trailing to her sadly over the water. " Ah, dear love ! " she said when he was come to her, " if I had not distrusted you, you would not have deceived me : thus, for my fault we are punished." So she sorrowed, and he answered her :

" Nay, dear love, for if I had not deceived you, you would not have distrusted me. I thought I was not happy, yet I feared to tell it you." Thus they sorrowed together, both laying on themselves the blame and the burden.

Then she said to him : " Be here for me to-night, for now I must go ; but then I shall return."

She went back to the palace, and told her mother of all that had happened. "And now," she said, "you who know where my happiness lies will not forbid me from following it; for my heart is again with the grey heron." And the Queen wept, but would not say her no.

So that night the Princess went and kissed her children as they slept standing up in their beds, with their funny feather-pates to one side; and then she took down her skin of feathers and put it on, and became changed once more into a grey heron. And again she went up to the two in their cots, and kissed their birdish heads saying: "They who can change at will, being but half human, they will come and visit us in the great pool by the wood, and bring back word of us here."

In the morning the Princess was gone, and the two children when they woke looked at each other and said: "Did we dream last night?"

They both answered each other "Yes, first we dreamed that our mother came and kissed us; and we liked that. And then we dreamed that a grey heron came and kissed us, and we liked that better still!" They waved their arms up and down. "Why have we not wings?" they kept asking. All day long they did this, playing that they were birds. If a window were opened, it was with the greatest difficulty that they were kept from trying to fly through.

In the Court they were known as the "Feather-pates"; nothing could they be taught at all. When they were rebuked they would stand on one leg and sigh with their heads on one side; but

no one ever saw tears come out of their birdish eyes.

Now at night they would dream that two grey herons came and stood by their bedsides, kissing them; "And where in the world," they said when they woke, "*are* our wings?"

One day, wandering about in the palace, they came upon the closet in which hung the two little feather coats. "O!!!" they cried, and opened hard bright eyes at each other, nodding, for now they knew what they would do. "If we told, they would be taken from us," they said; and they waited till it was night. Then they crept back and took the two little coats from their pegs, and, putting them on, were turned into two young herons.

Through the window they flew, away down to the great fish-pond in the wood. Their father and mother saw them coming, and clapped their wings for joy. "See," they said, "our children come to visit us, and our hearts are left to us to love with. What further happiness can we want?" But when they were not looking at each other they sighed.

All night long the two young herons stayed with their parents; they bathed, and fished, and flew, till they were weary. Then the Princess showed them the nest among the reeds, and told them all the story of their lives.

"But it is much nicer to be herons than to be real people," said the young ones, sadly, and became very sorrowful when dawn drew on, and their mother told them to go back to the palace and hang up the feather coats again, and be as they had been the day before.

Long, long the day now seemed to them; they hardly waited till it was night before they took down their feather-skins, and, putting them on, flew out and away to the fish-pond in the wood.

So every night they went, when all in the palace were asleep; and in the morning came back before anyone was astir, and were found by their nurses lying demurely between the sheets, just as they had been left the night before.

One day the Queen when she went to see her daughter said to her, "My child, your two children are growing less like human beings and more like birds every day. Nothing will they learn or do, but stand all day flapping their arms up and down, and saying, 'Where are our wings, where are our wings?' The idea of one of them ever coming to the throne makes your father's hair stand on end under his crown."

"Oh, mother," said the heron-Princess, "I have made a sad bed for you and my father to lie on!"

One day the two children said to each other, "Our father and mother are sad, because they want to be real persons again, instead of having wings and catching fish the way we like to do. Let us give up being real persons, which is all so much trouble, and such a want of exercise, and make them exchange with us!" But when the two young herons went down to the pond and proposed it to them, their parents said, "You are young; you do not know what you would be giving up." Nor would they consent to it at all.

Now one morning it happened that the Feather-pates were so late in returning to the palace that the

Queen, coming into their chamber, found the two beds empty; and just as she had turned away to search for them elsewhere, she heard a noise of wings and saw the two young herons come flying in through the window. Then she saw them take off their feather-skins and hang them up in the closet, and after that go and lie down in their beds so as to look as if they had been there all night.

The Queen struck her hands together with horror at the sight, but she crept away softly, so that they did not know they had been found out. But as soon as they were out of their beds and at play in another part of the palace, the Queen went to the closet, and setting fire to the two heron-skins where they hung, burnt them till not a feather of them was left, and only a heap of grey ashes remained to tell what had become of them.

At night, when the Feather-pates went to the closet and found their skins gone, and saw what had become of them, their grief knew no bounds. They trembled with fear and rage, and tears rained out of their eyes as they beheld themselves deprived of their bird bodies and made into real persons for good and all.

"We won't be real persons!" they cried. But for all their crying they knew no way out of it. They made themselves quite ill with grief; and that night, for the first time since they had found their way to the closet, they stayed where their nurses had put them, and did not even stand up in their beds to go to sleep. There they lay with gasping mouth, and big bird-like eyes all languid with grief, and hollow grey cheeks.

Presently their father and mother came seeking for them, wondering why they had not come down to the fish-pond as they were wont. "Where are you, my children?" cried the heron-Princess, putting her head in through the window.

"Here we are, both at death's door!" they cried. "Come and see us die! Our wicked grandam has burnt our feather-skins and made us into real persons for ever and ever, Amen. But we will die rather!"

The parent herons, when they heard that, flew in through the window and bent down over the little ones' beds.

The two children reached up their arms. "Give us your feathers!" they cried. "We shall die if you don't! We *will* die if you don't! O, do!" But still the parent birds hesitated, nor knew what to do.

"Bend down, and let me whisper something!" said the boy to his father: and "Bend down, and whisper!" cried the girl to her mother. And father and mother bent down over the faces of their sick children. Then these, both together, caught hold of them, and crying, "Human heart, and human form, exchange with the grey heron!" pulled off their parents' feather-skins, and put them upon themselves.

And there once more stood Prince Heron and the Princess in human shape, while the two children had turned into herons in their place.

The young herons laughed and shouted and clapped their wings for joy. "Are you not happy now?" cried they. And when their parents saw the joy, not only in their children's eyes, but in each other's, and felt their hearts growing glad in the

bodies they had regained, then they owned that the Feather-pates had been wise in their generation, and done well according to their lights.

So it came about that the Prince and the Princess lived happily ever after, and the two young herons lived happily also, and were the best-hearted birds the world ever saw.

In course of time the Prince and Princess had other children, who pleased the old King better than the first had done. But the parents loved none better than the two who lived as herons by the great fish-pond in the wood; nor could there be greater love than was found between these and their younger brothers and sisters, whose nature it was to be real persons.

THE CROWN'S WARRANTY

FIVE hundred years ago or more, a king died, leaving two sons: one was the child of his first wife, and the other of his second, who surviving him became his widow. When the king was dying he took off the royal crown which he wore, and set it upon the head of the elder born, the son of his first wife, and said to him: "God is the lord of the air, and of the water, and of the dry land: this gift cometh to thee from God. Be merciful, over whatsoever thou holdest power, as God is!" And saying these words he laid his hands upon the heads of his two sons and died.

Now this crown was no ordinary crown, for it was made of the gold brought by the Wise Men of the East when they came to worship at Bethlehem. Every king that had worn it since then had reigned well and uprightly, and had been loved by all his people; but only to himself was it known what virtue lay in his crown; and every king at dying gave it to his son with the same words of blessing.

So, now, the king's eldest son wore the crown; and his step-mother knew that her own son could not wear it while he lived, therefore she looked on and said nothing. Now he was known to all the people of his country, because of his right to the throne, as the king's son; and his brother, the child of the second wife, was called the queen's son. But as yet they were both young, and cared little enough for crowns.

After the king's death the queen was made regent till the king's son should be come to a full age; but already the little king wore the royal crown his father had left him, and the queen looked on and said nothing.

More than three years went by, and everybody said how good the queen was to the little king who was not her own son; and the king's son, for his part, was good to her and to his step-brother, loving them both; and all by himself he kept thinking, having his thoughts guarded and circled by his golden crown, "How shall I learn to be a wise king, and to be merciful when I have power, as God is?"

So to everything that came his way, to his playthings and his pets, to his ministers and his servants, he played the king as though already his word made life and death. People watching him said, "Everything that has touch with the king's son loves him." They told strange tales of him: only in fairy books could they be believed, because they were so beautiful; and all the time the queen, getting a good name for herself, looked on and said nothing.

One night the king's son was lying half-asleep upon his bed, with wise dreams coming and going under the circle of his gold crown, when a mouse ran out of the wainscot and came and jumped up upon the couch. The poor mouse had turned quite white with fear and horror, and was trembling in every limb as it cried its news into the king's ear. "O king's son," it said, "get up and run for your life! I was behind the wainscot in the queen's closet, and this is what I heard: if you stay here, when you wake up to-morrow you will be dead!"

The king's son got up, and all alone in the dark night stole out of the palace, seeking safety for his dear life. He sighed to himself, "There was a pain in my crown ever since I wore it. Alas, mother, I thought you were too kind a step-mother to do this!"

Outside it was still winter: there was no warmth in the world, and not a leaf upon the trees. He wandered away and away, wondering where he should hide.

The queen, when her villains came and told her the king's son was not to be found, went and looked in her magic crystal to find trace of him. As soon as it grew light, for in the darkness the crystal could show her nothing, she saw many miles away the king's son running to hide himself in the forest. So she sent out her villains to search until they should find him.

As they went the sun grew hot in the sky, and birds began singing. "It is spring!" cried the messengers. "How suddenly it has come!" They rode on till they came to the forest.

The king's son, stumbling along through the forest under the bare boughs, thought, "Even here where shall I hide? Nowhere is there a leaf to cover me." But when the sun grew warm he looked up; and there were all the trees breaking into bud and leaf, making a green heaven above his head. So when he was too weary to go farther, he climbed into the largest tree he could find; and the leaves covered him.

The queen's messengers searched through all the forest but could not find him; so they went back

to her empty handed, not having either the king's crown or his heart to show. "Fools!" she cried, looking in her magic crystal, "he was in the big sycamore under which you stopped to give your horses provender!"

The sycamore said to the king's son, "The queen's eye is on you; get down and run for your life till you get to the hollow tarn-stones among the hills! But if you stay here, when you wake to-morrow you will be dead."

When the queen's messengers came once more to the forest they found it all wintry again, and without leaf; only the sycamore was in full green, clapping its hands for joy in the keen and bitter air.

The messengers searched, and beat down the leaves, but the king's son was not there. They went back to the queen. She looked long in her magic crystal, but little could she see; for the king's son had hidden himself in a small cave beside the tarn-stones, and into the darkness the crystal could not pry.

Presently she saw a flight of birds crossing the blue, and every bird carried a few crumbs of bread in its beak. Then she ran and called to her villains, "Follow the birds, and they will take you to where the little wizard is; for they are carrying bread to feed him, and they are all heading for the tarn-stones up on the hills."

The birds said to the king's son, "Now you are rested; we have fed you, and you are not hungry. The queen's eye is on you. Up, and run for your life! If you stay here, when you wake up to-morrow you will be dead."

" Where shall I go ? " said the king's son. " Go," answered the birds, " and hide in the rushes on the island of the pool of sweet waters ! "

When the queen's messengers came to the tarn-stones, it was as though five thousand people had been feeding : they found crumbs enough to fill twelve baskets full, lying in the cave ; but no king's son could they lay their hands on.

The king's son was lying hidden among the rushes on the island of the great pool of sweet waters ; and thick and fast came silver-scaled fishes, feeding him.

It took the queen three days of hard gazing in her crystal, before she found how the fishes all swam to a point among the rushes of the island in the pool of sweet waters, and away again. Then she knew : and running to her messengers she cried : " He is among the rushes on the island in the pool of sweet waters ; and all the fishes are feeding him ! "

The fishes said to the king's son : " The queen's eye is on you ; up, and swim to shore, and away for your life ! For if they come and find you here, when you wake to-morrow you will certainly be dead."

" Where shall I go ? " asked the king's son. " Wherever I go, she finds me." " Go to the old fox who gets his poultry from the palace, and ask him to hide you in his burrow ! "

When the queen's messengers came to the pool they found the fishes playing at *alibis* all about in the water ; but nothing of the king's son could they see.

The king's son came to the fox, and the fox hid him in his burrow, and brought him butter and eggs from the royal dairy. This was better fare than the king's son had had since the beginning of his wanderings, and he thanked the fox warmly for his friendship. "On the contrary," said the fox, "I am under an obligation to you; for ever since you came to be my guest I have felt like an honest man." "If I live to be king," said the king's son, "you shall always have butter and eggs from the royal dairy, and be as honest as you like."

The queen hugged her magic crystal for a whole week, but could make nothing out of it: for her crystal showed her nothing of the king's son's hiding-place, nor of the fox at his nightly thefts of butter and eggs from the royal dairy. But it so happened that this same fox was a sort of half-brother of the queen's; and so guilty did he feel with his brand-new good conscience that he quite left off going to see her. So in a little while the queen, with her suspicions and her magic crystal, had nosed out the young king's hiding-place.

The fox said to the king's son: "The queen's eye is on you! Get out and run for your life, for if you stay here till to-morrow, you will wake up and find yourself a dead goose!"

"But where else can I go to?" asked the king's son. "Is there any place left for me?" The fox laughed, and winked, and whispered a word; and all at once the king's son got up and went.

The queen had said to her messengers, "Go and look in the fox's hole; and you shall find him!" But the messengers came and dug up the burrow,

and found butter and eggs from the royal dairy, but of the king's son never a sign.

The king's son came to the palace, and as he crept through the gardens he found there his little brother alone at play,—playing sadly because now he was all alone. Then the king's son stopped and said, "Little brother, do you so much wish to be king?" And taking off the crown, he put it upon his brother's head. Then he went on through underground ways and corridors, till he came to the palace dungeons.

Now a dungeon is a hard thing to get out of, but it is easy enough to get into. He came to the deepest and darkest dungeon of all, and there he opened the door, and went in and hid himself.

The queen's son came running to his mother, wearing the king's crown. "Oh, mother," he said, "I am frightened! while I was playing, my brother came looking all dead and white, and put this crown on my head. Take it off for me, it hurts!"

When the queen saw the crown on her son's head, she was horribly afraid; for that it should have so come there was the most unlikely thing of all. She fetched her crystal ball, and looked in, asking where the king's son might be, and, for answer, the crystal became black as night.

Then said the queen to herself, "He is dead at last!"

But, now that the king's crown was on the wrong head, the air, and the water, and the dry land, over which God is lord, heard of it. And the trees said, "Until the king's son returns, we will not put forth bud or leaf!"

And the birds said, " We will not sing in the land, or breed or build nests until the king's son returns ! "

And the fishes said, " We will not stay in the ponds or rivers to get caught, unless the king's son, to whom we belong, returns ! "

And the foxes said, " Unless the king's son returns, we will increase and multiply exceedingly and be like locusts in the land ! "

So all through that land the trees, though it was spring, stayed as if it were mid-winter ; and all the fishes swam down to the sea ; and all the birds flew over the sea, away into other countries ; and all the foxes increased and multiplied, and became like locusts in the land.

Now when the trees, and the birds, and the beasts, and the fishes led the way the good folk of the country discovered that the queen was a criminal. So, after the way of the flesh, they took the queen and her little son, and bound them, and threw them into the deepest and darkest dungeon they could find ; and said they : " Until you tell us where the king's son is, there you stay and starve ! "

The king's son was playing all alone in his dungeon with the mice who brought him food from the palace larder, when the queen and her son were thrown down to him fast bound, as though he were as dangerous as a den of lions. At first he was terribly afraid when he found himself pursued into his last hiding-place ; but presently he gathered from the queen's remarks that she was quite powerless to do him harm.

"Oh, what a wicked woman I am!" she moaned; and began crying lamentably, as if she hoped to melt the stone walls which formed her prison.

Presently her little son cried, "Mother, take off my brother's crown; it pricks me!" And the king's son sat in his corner, and cried to himself with grief over the harm that his step-mother's wickedness had brought about.

"Mother," cried the queen's son again, "night and day since I have worn it, it pricks me; I cannot sleep!"

But the queen's heart was still hard; not if she could help, would she yet take off from her son the crown.

Hours went by, and the queen and her son grew hungry. "We shall be starved to death!" she cried. "Now I see what a wicked woman I am!"

"Mother," cried the queen's son, "someone is putting food into my mouth!" "No one," said the queen, "is putting any into mine. Now I know what a wicked woman I am!"

Presently the king's son came to the queen also, and began feeding her. "Someone is putting food into *my* mouth, now!" cried the queen. "If it is poisoned I shall die in agony! I wish," she said, "I wish I knew your brother were not dead; if I have killed him what a wicked woman I am!"

"Dear step-mother," said the king's son, "I am not dead, I am here."

"Here?" cried the queen, shaking with fright. "Here? not dead! How long have you been here?"

"Days, and days, and days," said the king's son, sadly.

"Ah! if I had only known *that*!" cried the queen. "*Now* I know what a wicked woman I am!"

Just then, the trap-door in the roof of the dungeon opened, and a voice called down, "Tell us where is the king's son! If you do not tell us, you shall stay here and starve."

"The king's son is here!" cried the queen.

"A likely story!" answered the gaolers. "Do you think we are going to believe that?" And they shut-to the trap.

The queen's son cried, "Dear brother, come and take back your crown, it pricks so!" But the king's son only undid the queen's bonds and his brother's. "Now," said he, "you are free: you can kill me now."

"Oh!" cried the queen, "what a wicked woman I must be! Do you think I could do it now?" Then she cried, "O little son, bring your poor head to me, and I will take off the crown!" and she took off the crown and gave it back to the king's son. "When I am dead," she said, "remember, and be kind to him!"

The king's son put the crown upon his own head.

Suddenly, outside the palace, all the land broke into leaf; there was a rushing sound in the river of fishes swimming up from the sea, and all the air was loud and dark with flights of returning birds. Almost at the same moment the foxes began to disappear and diminish, and cease to be like locusts in the land.

People came running to open the door of the deepest and darkest dungeon in the palace: "For either," they cried, "the queen is dead, or the king's son has been found!"

"Where is the king's son, then?" they called out, as they threw wide the door. "He is here!" cried the king; and out he came, to the astonishment of all, wearing his crown, and leading his step-mother and half-brother by the hand.

He looked at his step-mother, and she was quite white; as white as the mouse that had jumped upon the king's bed at midnight bidding him fly for his life. Not only her face, but her hair, her lips, and her very eyes were white and colourless, for she had gone blind from gazing too hard into her crystal ball, and hunting the king's son to death.

So she remained blind to the end of her days; but the king was more good to her than gold, and as for his brother, never did half-brothers love each other better than these. Therefore they all lived very happily together, and after a long time, the queen learned to forget what a wicked woman she had been.

ROCKING-HORSE LAND

LITTLE Prince Freedling woke up with a jump, and sprang out of bed into the sunshine. He was five years old that morning, by all the clocks and calendars in the kingdom; and the day was going to be beautiful. Every golden minute was precious. He was dressed and out of his room before the attendants knew that he was awake.

In the ante-chamber stood piles on piles of glittering presents; when he walked among them they came up to the measure of his waist. His fairy godmother had sent him a toy with the most humorous effect. It was labelled, "Break me and I shall turn into something else." So every time he broke it he got a new toy more beautiful than the last. It began by being a hoop, and from that it ran on, while the Prince broke it incessantly for the space of one hour, during which it became by turn—a top, a Noah's ark, a skipping-rope, a man-of-war, a box of bricks, a picture puzzle, a pair of stilts, a drum, a trumpet, a kaleidoscope, a steam-engine, and nine hundred and fifty other things exactly. Then he began to grow discontented, because it would never turn into the same thing again; and after having broken the man-of-war he wanted to get it back again. Also he wanted to see if the steam-engine would go inside the Noah's ark; but the toy would never be two thing sat the same time either. This was very unsatisfactory.

He thought his fairy godmother ought to have sent him two toys, out of which he could make combinations.

At last he broke it once more, and it turned into a kite; and while he was flying the kite he broke the string, and the kite went sailing away up into nasty blue sky, and was never heard of again.

Then Prince Freedling sat down and howled at his fairy-godmother; what a dissembling lot fairy-godmothers were, to be sure! They were always setting traps to make their god-children unhappy. Nevertheless, when told to, he took up his pen and wrote her a nice little note, full of bad spelling and tarradiddles, to say what a happy birthday he was spending in breaking up the beautiful toy she had sent him.

Then he went to look at the rest of the presents, and found it quite refreshing to break a few that did not send him giddy by turning into anything else.

Suddenly his eyes became fixed with delight; alone, right at the end of the room, stood a great black rocking-horse. The saddle and bridle were hung with tiny gold bells and balls of coral; and the horse's tail and mane flowed till they almost touched the ground.

The Prince scampered across the room, and threw his arms around the beautiful creature's neck. All its bells jangled as the head swayed gracefully down; and the prince kissed it between the eyes. Great eyes they were, the colour of fire, so wonderfully bright, it seemed they must be really

alive, only they did not move, but gazed continually with a set stare at the tapestry-hung wall, on which were figures of armed knights riding to battle.

So Prince Freedling mounted to the back of his rocking-horse; and all day long he rode and shouted to the figures of the armed knights, challenging them to fight, or leading them against the enemy.

At length, when it came to be bedtime, weary of so much glory, he was lifted down from the saddle and carried away to bed.

In his sleep Freedling still felt his black rocking-horse swinging to and fro under him, and heard the melodious chime of its bells, and, in the land of dreams, saw a great country open before him, full of the sound of the battle-cry and the hunting-horn calling him to strange perils and triumphs.

In the middle of the night he grew softly awake, and his heart was full of love for his black rocking-horse. He crept gently out of bed: he would go and look at it where it was standing so grand and still in the next room, to make sure that it was all safe and not afraid of being by itself in the dark night. Parting the door-hangings he passed through into the wide hollow chamber beyond, all littered about with toys.

The moon was shining in through the window, making a square cistern of light upon the floor. And then, all at once, he saw that the rocking-horse had moved from the place where he had left it! It had crossed the room, and was standing

close to the window, with its head toward the night, as though watching the movement of the clouds and the trees swaying in the wind.

The Prince could not understand how it had been moved so; he was a little bit afraid, and stealing timidly across, he took hold of the bridle to comfort himself with the jangle of its bells. As he came close, and looked up into the dark solemn face he saw that the eyes were full of tears, and reaching up felt one fall warm against his hand.

"Why do you weep, my Beautiful?" said the Prince.

The rocking-horse answered, "I weep because I am a prisoner, and not free. Open the window, Master, and let me go!"

"But if I let you go I shall lose you," said the Prince. "Cannot you be happy here with me?"

"Let me go," said the horse, "for my brothers call me out of Rocking-Horse Land; I hear my mare whinnying to her foals; and they all cry, seeking me through the ups and hollows of my native fastnesses! Sweet Master, let me go this night, and I will return to you when it is day!"

Then Freedling said, "How shall I know that you will return: and what name shall I call you by?"

And the rocking-horse answered, "My name is Rollonde. Search my mane till you find in it a white hair; draw it out and wind it upon one of your fingers; and so long as you have it so wound

you are my master; and wherever I am I must return at your bidding."

So the Prince drew down the rocking-horse's head, and searching the mane, he found the white hair, and wound it upon his finger and tied it. Then he kissed Rollonde between the eyes, saying, "Go, Rollonde, since I love you, and wish you to be happy; only return to me when it is day!" And so saying, he threw open the window to the stir of the night.

Then the rocking-horse lifted his dark head and neighed aloud for joy, and swaying forward with a mighty circling motion rose full into the air, and sprang out into the free world before him.

Freedling watched how with plunge and curve he went over the bowed trees; and again he neighed into the darkness of the night, then swifter than wind disappeared in the distance. And faintly from far away came a sound of the neighing of many horses answering him.

Then the Prince closed the window and crept back to bed; and all night long he dreamed strange dreams of Rocking-Horse Land. There he saw smooth hills and valleys that rose and sank without a stone or a tree to disturb the steel-like polish of their surface, slippery as glass, and driven over by a strong wind; and over them, with a sound like the humming of bees, flew the rocking-horses. Up and down, up and down, with bright manes streaming like coloured fires, and feet motionless behind and before, went the swift pendulum of their flight. Their long bodies bowed and rose;

their heads worked to give impetus to their going; they cried, neighing to each other over hill and valley, "Which of us shall be first? which of us shall be first?" After them the mares with their tall foals came spinning to watch, crying also among themselves, "Ah! which shall be first?"

"Rollonde, Rollonde is first!" shouted the Prince, clapping his hands as they reached the goal; and at that, all at once, he woke and saw it was broad day. Then he ran and threw open the window, and holding out the finger that carried the white hair, cried, "Rollonde, Rollonde, come back, Rollonde!"

Far away he heard an answering sound; and in another moment there came the great rocking-horse himself, dipping and dancing over the hills. He crossed the woods and cleared the palace-wall at a bound, and floating in through the window, dropped to rest at Prince Freedling's side, rocking gently to and fro as though panting from the strain of his long flight.

"Now are you happy?" asked the Prince as he caressed him.

"Ah! sweet Prince," said Rollonde, "ah, kind Master!" And then he said no more, but became the still stock staring rocking-horse of the day before, with fixed eyes and rigid limbs, which could do nothing but rock up and down with a jangling of sweet bells so long as the Prince rode him.

That night Freedling came again when all was still in the palace; and now as before Rollonde had moved from his place and was standing with his

head against the window waiting to be let out. "Ah, dear Master," he said, so soon as he saw the Prince coming, "let me go this night also, and surely I will return with day."

So again the Prince opened the window, and watched him disappear, and heard from far away the neighing of the horses in Rocking-Horse Land calling to him. And in the morning with the white hair round his finger he called "Rollonde, Rollonde!" and Rollonde neighed and came back to him, dipping and dancing over the hills.

Now this same thing happened every night; and every morning the horse kissed Freedling, saying, "Ah! dear Prince and kind Master," and became stock still once more.

So a year went by, till one morning Freedling woke up to find it was his sixth birthday. And as six is to five, so were the presents he received on his sixth birthday for magnificence and multitude to the presents he had received the year before. His fairy godmother had sent him a bird, a real live bird; but when he pulled its tail it became a lizard, and when he pulled the lizard's tail it became a mouse, and when he pulled the mouse's tail it became a cat. Then he did very much want to see if the cat would eat the mouse, and not being able to have them both he got rather vexed with his fairy godmother. However, he pulled the cat's tail and the cat became a dog, and when he pulled the dog's the dog became a goat; and so it went on till he got to a cow. And he pulled the cow's tail and it became a camel, and he pulled the camel's tail and it became an elephant, and still not being contented, he pulled the ele-

phant's tail and it became a guinea-pig. Now a guinea-pig has no tail to pull, so it remained a guinea-pig, while Prince Freedling sat down and howled at his fairy godmother.

But the best of all his presents was the one given to him by the King his father. It was a most beautiful horse, for, said the King, "You are now old enough to learn to ride."

So Freedling was put upon the horse's back, and from having ridden so long upon his rocking-horse he learned to ride perfectly in a single day, and was declared by all the courtiers to be the most perfect equestrian that was ever seen.

Now these praises and the pleasure of riding a real horse so occupied his thoughts that that night he forgot all about Rollonde, and falling fast asleep dreamed of nothing but real horses and horsemen going to battle. And so it was the next night too.

But the night after that, just as he was falling asleep, he heard someone sobbing by his bed, and a voice saying, "Ah! dear Prince and kind Master, let me go, for my heart breaks for a sight of my native land." And there stood his poor rocking-horse Rollonde, with tears falling out of his beautiful eyes on to the white coverlet.

Then the Prince, full of shame at having forgotten his friend, sprang up and threw his arms round his neck saying, "Be of good cheer, Rollonde, for now surely I will let thee go!" and he ran to the window and opened it for the horse to go through. "Ah, dear Prince and kind Master!" said Rollonde. Then he lifted his head and neighed so that the

whole palace shook, and swaying forward till his head almost touched the ground he sprang out into the night and away towards Rocking-Horse Land.

Then Prince Freedling, standing by the window, thoughtfully unloosed the white hair from his finger, and let it float away into the darkness, out of sight of his eye or reach of his hand.

"Good-bye, Rollonde," he murmured softly, "brave Rollonde, my own good Rollonde! Go and be happy in your own land, since I, your Master, was forgetting to be kind to you." And far away he heard the neighing of horses in Rocking-Horse Land.

Many years after, when Freedling had become King in his father's stead, the fifth birthday of the Prince his son came to be celebrated; and there on the morning of the day, among all the presents that covered the floor of the chamber, stood a beautiful foal rocking-horse, black, with deep-burning eyes.

No one knew how it had come there, or whose present it was, till the King himself came to look at it. And when he saw it so like the old Rollonde he had loved as a boy, he smiled, and, stroking its dark mane, said softly in its ear, "Art thou, then, the son of Rollonde?" And the foal answered him, "Ah, dear Prince and kind Master!" but never a word more.

Then the King took the little Prince his son, and told him the story of Rollonde as I have told it here; and at the end he went and searched in the foal's mane till he found one white hair, and, drawing it

out, he wound it about the little Prince's finger, bidding him guard it well and be ever a kind master to Rollonde's son.

So here is my story of Rollonde come to a good ending.

JAPONEL

THERE was once upon a time a young girl named Japonel, the daughter of a wood-cutter, and of all things that lived by the woodside, she was the most fair.

Her hair in its net was like a snared sunbeam, and her face like a spring over which roses leaned down and birds hung fluttering to drink—such being the in-dwelling presence of her eyes and her laughing lips and her cheeks.

Whenever she crossed the threshold of her home, the birds and the flowers began calling to her, "Look up, Japonel! Look down, Japonel!" for the sight of the sweet face they loved so much. The squirrel called over its bough, "Look up, Japonel!" and the rabbit from between the roots, "Japonel, look down!" And Japonel, as she went, looked up and looked down, and laughed, thinking what a sweet-sounding place the world was.

Her mother, looking at her from day to day, became afraid: she said to the wood-cutter, "Our child is too fair; she will get no good of it."

But her husband answered, "Good wife, why should it trouble you? What is there in these quiet parts that can harm her? Keep her only from the pond in the wood, lest the pond-witch see her and become envious."

"Do not go near water, or you may fall in!" said her mother one day as she saw Japonel bending

down to look at her face in a rain-puddle by the road.

Japonel laughed softly. " O silly little mother, how can I fall into a puddle that is not large enough for my two feet to stand in ? "

But the mother thought to herself, when Japonel grows older and finds the pond in the wood, she will go there to look at her face, unless she has something better to see it in at home. So from the next pedlar who came that way she bought a little mirror and gave it to Japonel, that in it she might see her face with its spring-like beauty, and so have no cause to go near the pond in the wood. The lovely girl, who had never seen a mirror in her life, took the rounded glass in her hand and gazed for a long time without speaking, wondering more and more at her own loveliness. Then she went softly away with it into her own chamber, and wishing to find a name for a thing she loved so much, she called it, " Stream's eye," and hung it on the wall beside her bed.

In the days that followed, the door of her chamber would be often shut, and her face seldom seen save of herself alone. And " Look up, Japonel ! Look down, Japonel ! " was a sound she no longer cared to hear as she went through the woods ; for the memory of " Stream's eye " was like a dream that clung to her, and floated in soft ripples on her face.

She grew tall like an aspen, and more fair, but pale. Her mother said, " Woe is me, for now I have made her vain through showing her her great beauty." And to Japonel herself she said, " Oh, my beautiful, my bright darling, though I have made thee vain, I

pray thee to punish me not. Do not go near the pond in the wood to look in it, or an evil thing will happen to thee." And Japonel smiled dreamily amid half-thoughts, and kissing her mother, "Dear mother," she said, "does 'Stream's eye' tell me everything of my beauty, or am I in other eyes still fairer?" Then her mother answered sadly, "Nay, but I trust the open Eye of God finds in thee a better beauty than thy mirror can tell thee of."

Japonel, when she heard that answer, went away till she came to the pond in the wood. It lay down in a deep hollow, and drank light out of a clear sky, which, through a circle of dark boughs, ever looked down on it. "Perhaps," she said to herself, "it is here that God will open His Eye and show me how much fairer I am than even 'Stream's eye' can tell me." But she thought once of her mother's words, and went by.

Then she turned again, "It is only that my mother fears lest I become vain. What harm can come if I do look once? it will be in my way home." So she crept nearer and nearer to the pond, saying to herself, "To see myself once as fair as God sees me cannot be wrong. Surely that will not make me more vain." And when she came through the last trees, and stood near the brink, she saw before her a little old woman, dressed in green, kneeling by the water and looking in.

"There at least," she said to herself, "is one who looks in without any harm happening to her. I wonder what it is she sees that she stays there so still." And coming a little nearer, "Good dame," called Japonel, "what is it you have found there, that you

gaze at so hard ? " And the old woman, without moving or looking up, answered, " My own face; but a hundred times younger and fairer, as it was in my youth."

Then thought Japonel, " How should I look now, who am fair and in the full bloom of my youth ? It is because my mother fears lest I shall become vain that she warned me." So she came quickly and knelt down by the old woman and looked in. And even as she caught sight of her face gazing up, pale and tremulous (" Quick, go away ! " its lips seemed to be saying), the old woman slid down from the bank and caught hold of her reflection with green, weed-like arms, and drew it away into the pool's still depths below. Beneath Japonel's face lay nothing now but blank dark water, and far away in, a faint face gazed back beseeching, and its lips moved with an imprisoned prayer that might not make itself heard. Only three bubbles rose to the surface, and broke into three separate sighs like the shadow of her own name. Then the pond-witch stirred the mud, and all trace of that lost image went out, and Japonel was left alone.

She rose, expecting to see nothing, to be blind; but the woods were there, night shadows were gathering to their tryst under the boughs, and brighter stars had begun blotting the semi-brightness of the sky. All the way home she went feebly, not yet resolved of the evil that had come upon her. She stole quietly to her own little room in the fading light, and took down " Stream's eye " from the wall. Then she fell forward upon the bed, for all the surface of her glass was grown blank:

never could she hope to look upon her own face again.

The next morning she hung her head low, for she feared all her beauty was flown from her, till she heard her father say, " Wife, each day it seems to me our Japonel grows more fair." And her mother answered, sighing, " She is too fair, I know."

Then Japonel set out once more for the pond in the wood. As she went the birds and the flowers sang to her, " Look up, Japonel; look down, Japonel! " but Japonel went on, giving them no heed. She came to the water's side, and leaning over, saw far down in a tangle of green weeds a face that looked back to hers, faint and blurred by the shimmering movement of the water. Then, weeping, she wrung her hands and cried :

" Ah! sweet face of Japonel,
Beauty and grace of Japonel,
Image and eyes of Japonel,
' Come back! ' sighs Japonel."

And bubble by bubble a faint answer was returned that broke like a sob on the water's surface :

" I am the face of Japonel,
The beauty and grace of Japonel;
Here under a spell, Japonel,
I dwell, Japonel."

All day Japonel cried so, and was so answered. Now and again, green weeds would come skimming to the surface, and seem to listen to her reproach, and then once more sink down to their bed in the

pond's depths, and lie almost still, waving long slimy fingers through the mud.

The next day Japonel came again, and cried as before :

"Ah! sweet face of Japonel.
Beauty and grace of Japonel,
Image and eyes of Japonel,
'Come back!' cries Japonel."

And her shadow in the water made answer :

"I am the face of Japonel,
The beauty and grace of Japonel;
Here under a spell, Japonel,
I dwell, Japonel."

Now as she sat and sorrowed she noticed that whenever a bird flew over the pond it dropped something out of its mouth into the water, and looking she saw millet-seeds lying everywhere among the weeds of its surface; one by one they were being sucked under by the pond-witch.

Japonel stayed so long by the side of the pond, that on her way home it had fallen quite dark while she was still in the middle of the wood. Then all at once she heard a bird with loud voice cry out of the darkness, "Look up, Japonel!" The cry was so sudden and so strange, coming at that place and that hour, that all through her grief she heard it, and stopped to look up. Again in the darkness she heard the bird cry, "Why do you weep, Japonel?" Japonel said, "Because the pond-witch has carried away my beautiful reflection in the water, so that I can see my own face no more."

Then the bird said, " Why have you not done as the birds do ? She is greedy ; so they throw in millet-seeds, and then she does not steal the reflection of their wings when they pass over." And Japonel answered, " Because I did not know that, therefore I am to-day the most miserable of things living." Then said the bird, " Come to-morrow, and you shall be the happiest."

So the next day Japonel went and sat by the pond in the wood, waiting to be made the happiest, as the bird had promised her. All day long great flocks of birds went to and fro, and the pond became covered with seeds. Japonel looked ; " Why, they are poppy-seeds ! " she cried. (Now poppy-seeds when they are eaten make people sleep.) Just as the sun was setting all the birds began suddenly to cry in chorus, " Look down, Japonel ! Japonel, look down !" And there, on the pond's surface, lay an old woman dressed in green, fast asleep, with all the folds of her dress and the wrinkles of her face full of poppy-seeds.

Then Japonel ran fast to the pond's edge and looked down. Slowly from the depth rose the pale beautiful reflection of herself, untying itself from the thin green weeds, and drifting towards the bank. It looked up with tremulous greeting, half sadness, half pleasure, seeming so glad after that long separation to return to its sweet mistress. So as it came and settled below her own face in the water, Japonel stooped down over it and kissed it.

Then she sprang back from the brink and ran home, fast, fast in the fading light. And there, when she looked in her mirror, was once more the beautiful face she loved, a little blue and wan from

its long imprisonment under water. And so it ever remained, beautiful, but wan, to remind her of the sorrow that had come upon her when, loving this too well, she had not loved enough to listen to the cry of the birds: "Look up, Japonel!" and, "Japonel, look down!"

GAMMELYN, THE DRESSMAKER

THERE was once upon a time a King's daughter who was about to be given in marriage to a great prince; and when the wedding-day was yet a long way off, the whole court began to concern itself as to how the bride was to be dressed. What she should wear, and how she should wear it, was the question debated by the King and his Court day and night, almost without interruption. Whatever it was to be, it must be splendid, without peer. Must it be silk, or velvet, or satin; should it be enriched with brocade, or with gems, or sewn thick with pearls?

But when they came to ask the Princess, she said, "I will have only a dress of beaten gold, light as gossamer, thin as bee's-wing, soft as swan's-down."

Then the King, calling his chief goldsmith, told him to make for the Princess the dress of beaten gold. But the goldsmith knew no way how such a dress was to be made, and his answer to the King was, "Sire, the thing is not to be done."

Then the King grew very angry, for he said, "What a Princess can find it in her head to wish, some man must find it in his wits to accomplish." So he put the chief goldsmith in prison to think about it, and summoning all the goldsmiths in the kingdom, told them of the Princess's wish, that a dress should be made for her of beaten gold. But every one of the goldsmiths went down on his knees

to the King, saying, " Sire, the thing is not to be done." Thereupon the King clapped them all into prison, promising to cut off all their heads if in three weeks' time they had not put them together to some purpose and devised a plan for making such a dress as the Princess desired.

Now just then Gammelyn was passing through the country, and when he heard of all this, he felt very sorry for the goldsmiths, who had done nothing wrong, but had told honest truth about themselves to the King. So he set his bright wits to work, and at last said, " I think I can save the goldsmiths their heads, for I have found a way of making such a dress as this fine Princess desires."

Then he went to the King and said, " I have a way for making a dress of beaten gold."

" But," said the King, " have a care, for if you fail I shall assuredly cut off your head."

All the same Gammelyn took that risk willingly and set to work. And first he asked that the Princess would tell him what style of dress it should be; and the Princess said, " Beaten gold, light as gossamer, thin as bee's-wing, soft as swan's-down, and it must be made thus." So she showed him of what fashion sleeve, and bodice, and train should be. Then Gammelyn caused to be made (for he had a palace full of workers put under him) a most lovely dress, in the fashion the Princess had named, of white cambric closely woven; and the Princess came wondering at him, saying that it was to be only of beaten gold.

" You wait a while ! " said Gammelyn, for he had no liking for the Princess. Then he asked the King

for gold out of his treasury; but the King supplied him instead with gold from the stores of the imprisoned goldsmiths. So he put it in a sack, and carried it to a mill, and said to the miller, "Grind me this sack full of gold into flour." At first the miller stared at him for a madman, but when he saw the letter in Gammelyn's hands which the King had written, and which said, "I'll cut off your head if you don't!" then he set to with a will, and ground the gold into fine golden flour. So Gammelyn shouldered his sack and jogged back to the palace. The next thing he did was to summon all the gold-beaters in the kingdom, which he did easily enough with the King's letter; for directly they saw the words "I'll cut off your head if you don't!" and the King's signature beneath, they came running as fast as their legs could carry them, till all the streets which led up to the palace were full of them.

Then Gammelyn chose a hundred of the strongest, and took them into the chamber where the wedding-dress was in making. And the dress he took and spread out on iron tables, and, sprinkling the golden flour all over it, set the men to beat day and night for a whole week. And at the end of the week there was a splendid dress, that looked as if it were of pure gold only. But the Princess said, "My dress must be *all* gold, and no part cambric—this will not do." "You wait!" said Gammelyn, "it is not finished yet."

Then he made a fire of sweet spices and sandal-wood, jasmine, and mignonette; and into the fire he put the wonderful dress.

The Princess screamed with grief and rage; for

she was in love with the dress, though she was so nice in holding him to the conditions of the decree. But Gammelyn persevered, and what happened was this: the fire burnt away all the threads of the cambric, but was not hot enough to melt the gold; and when all the cambric was burnt, then he drew out of the fire a dress of beaten gold, light as gossamer, thin as bee's-wing, soft as swan's-down, and fragrant as a wind when it blows through a Sultan's garden.

So all the goldsmiths were set free from prison; and the King appointed Gammelyn his chief goldsmith.

But when the Princess saw the dress, she was so beside herself with pride and pleasure that she must have also a dress made of pearl, light as gossamer, thin as bee's-wing, soft as swan's-down. And the King sent for all his jewellers, and told them that such a dress was to be made; but they all went down on their bended knees, crying with one voice, "Sire, the thing is not to be done." And all the good they got for that was that they were clapped into prison till a way for doing it should be found.

Then the King said to Gammelyn, "Since my jewellers cannot make this dress, you must do it!" But Gammelyn said, "Sire, that is not in our bargain." And the only answer the King had to that was, "I'll cut off your head if you don't."

Gammelyn sighed like a sea-shell; but determining to make the best of a bad business, he set to work.

And, as before, he made a dress in the fashion

the Princess chose, of the finest weaving. He made each part separate; the two sleeves separate, the body separate, the skirt and train separate. Then, at his desire, the King commanded that all the oysters which were dredged out of the sea should be brought to him. Out of these he selected the five finest oysters of all; each one was the size of a tea-tray. Then he put them into a large tank and inside each shell he put one part of the dress—the weaving of which was so fine that there was plenty of room for it, as well as for the oysters. And in course of time he drew out from each shell —from one the body, from one the skirt, from one the train, from one a sleeve, from another the other sleeve. Next he fastened each part together with thread, and put the whole dress back into the tank; and into the mouth of one oyster he put the joinery of body and skirt, and into the mouth of another the joinery of skirt and train, and into the mouth of two others the joinery of the two sleeves, and the fifth oyster he ate. So the oysters did their work, laying their soft inlay over the gown, just as they laid it over the inside of their shells; and after a time Gammelyn drew forth a dress bright and gleaming, and pure mother-o'-pearl. But "No," said the Princess, "it must be all pure pearl, with nothing of thread in it." But, "Wait a while!" said Gammelyn, "I have not finished yet."

So by a decree of the King he caused to be gathered together all the moths in the kingdom—millions of moths; and he put them all into a bare iron room along with the dress, and sealed the

doors and windows with red sealing-wax. The Princess wept and sighed for the dress: "It will be all eaten," said she. "Then I shall cut off his head," said the King. But for all that, Gammelyn persevered.

And when he opened the door they found that every thread had been eaten away by the moths, while the mother-o'-pearl had been left uninjured. So the dress was a perfect pearl, light as gossamer, thin as bee's-wing, soft as swan's-down; and the King made Gammelyn his chief jeweller, and set all the other jewellers free.

Then the Princess was so delighted that she wished to have one more dress also, made all of butterflies' wings. "That were easily done," said Gammelyn, "but it were cruel to ask for such a dress to be made."

Nevertheless the Princess would have it so, and *he* should make it. "I'll cut off your head if you don't," said the King.

Gammelyn bumbled like a bee; but all he said was, "Many million butterflies will be wanted for such a work: you must let me have again the two dresses—the pearl, and the gold—for butterflies love bright colours that gleam and shine; and with these alone can I gather them all to one place."

So the Princess gave him the two dresses; and he went to the highest part of the palace, out on to the battlements of the great tower. There he faced towards the west, where lay a new moon, louting towards the setting sun; and he laid the two robes, one on either arm, spreading them

abroad, till they looked like two wings—a gold and a pearl. And a beam of the sun came and kissed the gold wing, and a pale quivering thread of moonlight touched the pearl wing; and Gammelyn sang:

"Light of the moon,
Light of the sun,
Pearl of the sky,
Gold from on high,
Hearken to me!

"Light of the moon,
Pearl of the sea,
Gold of the land
Here in my hand,
I render to thee.

"Butterflies come!
Carry us home,
Gold of the gnome,
Pearl of the sea."

And as he sang, out of the east came a soft muttering of wings and a deep moving mass like a bright storm-cloud. And out of the sun ran a long gold finger, and out of the moon a pale shivering finger of pearl, and touching the gold and the pearl, these became verily wings and not millinery. Then before the Princess could scream more than once, or the King say anything about cutting off heads, the bright cloud in the east became a myriad myriad of butterflies. And drawn by the falling flashing sun, and by the faint falling moon, and fanned by the million wings of his fellow-creatures, Gammelyn

sprang out from the palace wall on the crest of the butterfly-wind, and flew away brighter and farther each moment; and followed by his myriad train of butterflies, he passed out of sight, and in that country was never heard of again.

THE FEEDING OF THE EMIGRANTS

OVER the sea went the birds, flying southward to their other home where the sun was. The rustle of their wings, high overhead, could be heard down on the water; and their soft, shrill twitterings, and the thirsty nibbling of their beaks; for the seas were hushed, and the winds hung away in cloud-land.

Far away from any shore, and beginning to be weary, their eyes caught sight of a white form resting between sky and sea. Nearer they came, till it seemed to be a great white bird, brooding on the calmed water; and its wings were stretched high and wide, yet it stirred not. And the wings had in themselves no motion, but stood rigidly poised over their own reflection in the water.

Then the birds came curiously, dropping from their straight course, to wonder at the white wings that went not on. And they came and settled about this great, bird-like thing, so still and so grand.

On to the deck crept a small child, for the noise of the birds had come down to him in the hold. "There is nobody at home but me," he said; for he thought the birds must have come to call, and he wished to be polite. "They are all gone but me," he went on; "all gone. I am left alone."

The birds, none of them understood him; but

they put their heads on one side and looked down on him in a friendly way, seeming to consider.

He ran down below and fetched up a pannikin of water and some biscuit. He set the water down, and breaking the biscuit sprinkled it over the white deck. Then he clapped his hands to see them all flutter and crowd round him, dipping their bright heads to the food and drink he gave them.

They might not stay long, for the water-logged ship could not help them on the way they wished to go; and by sunset they must touch land again. Away they went, on a sudden, the whole crew of them, and the sound of their voices became faint in the bright sea-air.

"I am left alone!" said the child.

Many days ago, while he was asleep in a snug corner he had found for himself, the captain and crew had taken to the boats, leaving the great ship to its fate. And forgetting him because he was so small, or thinking that he was safe in some one of the other boats, the rough sailors had gone off without him, and he was left alone. So for a whole week he had stayed with the ship, like a whisper of its vanished life amid the blues of a deep calm. And the birds came to the ship only to desert it again quickly, because it stood so still upon the sea.

But that night the mermen came round the vessel's side, and sang; and the wind rose to their singing, and the sea grew rough. Yet the child slept with his head in dreams. The dreams came

from the mermen's songs, and he held his breath, and his heart stayed burdened by the deep sweetness of what he saw.

Dark and strange and cold the sea-valleys opened before him; blue sea-beasts ranged there, guarded by strong-finned shepherds, and fishes like birds darted to and fro, but made no sound. And that was what burdened his heart,—that for all the beauty he saw, there was no sound, no song of a single bird to comfort him.

The mermen reached out their blue arms to him, and sang; on the top of the waves they sang, striving to make him forget the silence of the land below. They offered him the sea-life: why should he be drowned and die?

And now over him in the dark night the great wings crashed, and beat abroad in the wind, and the ship made great way. And the mermen swam fast to be with her, and ceased from their own song, for the wind overhead sang loud in the rigging and the sails. But the child lifted his head in his sleep and smiled, for his soul was eased of the mermen's song, and it seemed to him that instead he heard birds singing in a far-off land, singing of a child whose loving hand had fed them, faint and weary, in their way over the wide ocean.

In that far southern land the dawn had begun, and the birds, waking one by one, were singing their story of him to the soft-breathing tamarisk boughs. And none of them knew how they had been sent as a salvage crew to save the child's spirit from the spell of the sea-dream, and

to carry it safely back to the land that loved him.

But with the child's body the white wings had flown down into the wave-buried valleys, and to a cleft of the sea-hills to rest.

WHITE BIRCH

ONCE upon a time there lived in a wood a brother and sister who had been forgotten by all the world. But this thing did not greatly grieve their hearts, because they themselves were all the world to each other: meeting or parting, they never forgot that. Nobody remained to tell them who they were; but she was "Little Sister," and he was "Fair Brother," and those were the only names they ever went by.

In their little wattled hut they would have been perfectly happy but for one thing which now and then they remembered and grieved over. Fair Brother was lame—not a foot could he put to the ground, nor take one step into the outside world. But he lay quiet on his bed of leaves, while Little Sister went out and in, bringing him food and drink, and the scent of flowers, and tales of the joy of earth and of the songs of birds.

One day she brought him a litter of withered birch-leaves to soften his bed and make it warmer for the approaching season of cold; and all the winter he lay on it, and sighed. Little Sister had never seen him so sad before.

In the spring, when the songs of the pairing birds began, his sorrow only grew greater. "Let me go out, let me go out," he cried; "only a little way into the bright world before I die!" She kissed his feet, and took him up in her arms and carried him. But she could only go a very little

way with her burden ; presently she had to return and lay him down again on his bed of leaves.

" Have I seen all the bright world ? " he asked. " Is it such a little place ? "

To hide her sorrow from him, Little Sister ran out into the woods, and as she went, wondering how to comfort his grief, she could not help weeping.

All at once at the foot of a tree she saw the figure of a woman seated. It was strange, for she had never before seen anybody else in the wood but themselves. The woman said to her, " Why is it that you weep so ? "

" The heart of Fair Brother is breaking," replied Little Sister. " It is because of that that I am weeping."

" Why is his heart breaking ? " inquired the other.

" I do not know," answered Little Sister. " Ever since last autumn fell it has been so. Always, before, he has been happy ; he has no reason not to be, only he is lame."

She had come close to the seated figure ; and looking, she saw a woman with a very white skin, in a robe and hood of deep grey. Grey eyes looked back at her with just a soft touch in them of the green that comes with the young leaves of spring.

" You are beautiful," said Little Sister, drawing in her breath.

" Yes, I am beautiful," answered the other. " Why is Fair Brother lame ? Has he no feet ? "

" Oh, beautiful feet ! " said Little Sister. " But they are like still water ; they cannot run."

" If you want him to run," said the other, " I can tell you what to do. What will you give me in exchange ? "

" Whatever you like to ask," answered Little Sister ; " but I am poor."

" You have beautiful hair," said the woman ; " will you let that go ? "

Little Sister stooped down her head, and let the other cut off her hair. The wind went out of it with a sigh as it fell into the grey woman's lap. She hid it away under her robe, and said, " Listen, Little Sister, and I will tell you ! To-night is the new moon. If you can hold your tongue till the moon is full, the feet of Fair Brother shall run like a stream from the hills, dancing from rock to rock."

" Only tell me what I must do ! " said Little Sister.

" You see this birch-tree, with its silver skin ? " said the woman. " Cut off two strips of it and weave them into shoes for Fair Brother. And when they are finished by the full moon, if you have not spoken, you have but to put them upon Fair Brother's feet, and they will outrun yours."

So Little Sister, as the other had told her, cut off two strips from the bark of the birch-tree, and ran home as fast as she could to tell her brother of the happiness which, with only a little waiting, was in store for them.

But as she came near home, over the low roof she saw the new moon hanging like a white feather in the air ; and, closing her lips, she went in and kissed Fair Brother silently.

He said, " Little Sister, loose out your hair over me, and let me feel the sweet airs; and tell me how the earth sounds, for my heart is sick with sorrow and longing." She took his hand and laid it upon her heart that he might feel its happy beating, but said no word. Then she sat down at his feet and began to work at the shoes. All the birch-bark she cut into long strips fit for weaving, doing everything as the grey woman had told her.

Fair Brother fretted at her silence, and cried, calling her cruel; but she only kissed his feet, and went on working the faster. And the white birch shoes grew under her hands; and every night she watched and saw the moon growing round.

Fair Brother said, " Little Sister, what have you done with your hair in which you used to fetch home the wind? And why do you never go and bring me flowers or sing me the song of the birds? And Little Sister looked up and nodded, but never answered or moved from her task, for her fingers were slow, and the moon was quick in its growing.

One night Fair Brother was lying asleep, and his head was filled with dreams of the outer world into which he longed to go. The full moon looked in through the open door, and Little Sister laughed in her heart as she slipped the birch shoes on to his feet. " Now run, dear feet," she whispered; " but do not outrun mine."

Up in his sleep leapt Fair Brother, for the dream of the white birch had hold of him. A lady with a dark hood and grey eyes full of the laughter of leaves beckoned him. Out he ran into the moonlight, and Little Sister laughed as she ran with him.

In a little while she called, "Do not outrun me, Fair Brother!" But he seemed not to hear her, for not a bit did he slacken the speed of his running.

Presently she cried again, "Rest with me a while, Fair Brother! Do not outrun me!" But Fair Brother's feet were fleet after their long idleness, and they only ran the faster. "Ah, ah!" she cried, all out of breath. "Come back to me when you have done running, Fair Brother." And as he disappeared among the trees, she cried after him, "How will you know the way, since you were never here before? Do not get lost in the wood, Fair Brother!"

She lay on the ground and listened, and could hear the white birch shoes carrying him away till all sound of them died.

When, next morning, he had not returned, she searched all day through the wood, calling his name.

"Where are you, Fair Brother? Where have you lost yourself?" she cried, but no voice answered her.

For a while she comforted her heart, saying, "He has not run all these years—no wonder he is still running. When he is tired he will return."

But days and weeks went by, and Fair Brother never came back to her. Every day she wandered searching for him, or sat at the door of the little wattled hut and cried.

One day she cried so much that the ground became quite wet with her tears. That night was the night of the full moon, but weary with grief

she lay down and slept soundly, though outside the woods were bright.

In the middle of the night she started up, for she thought she heard somebody go by; and, surely, feet were running away in the distance. And when she looked out, there across the doorway was the print of the birch shoes on the ground she had made wet with her tears.

"Alas, alas!" cried Little Sister. "What have I done that he comes to the very door of our home and passes by, though the moon shines in and shows it him?"

After that she searched everywhere through the forest to discover the print of the birch shoes upon the ground. Here and there after rain she thought she could see traces, but never was she able to track them far.

Once more came the night of the full moon, and once more in the middle of the night Little Sister started up and heard feet running away in the distance. She called, but no answer came back to her.

So on the third full moon she waited, sitting in the door of the hut, and would not sleep.

"If he has been twice," she said to herself, "he will come again, and I shall see him. Ah, Fair Brother, Fair Brother, I have given you feet; why have you so used me?"

Presently she heard a sound of footsteps, and there came Fair Brother running towards her. She saw his face pale and ghostlike, yet he never looked at her, but ran past and on without stopping.

"Fair Brother, Fair Brother, wait for me; do not outrun me!" cried Little Sister; and was up in haste to be after him.

He ran fast, and would not stop; but she ran fast too, for her love would not let him go. Once she nearly had him by the hair, and once she caught him by the cloak; but in her hand it shredded and crumbled like a dry leaf; and still, though there was no breath left in her, she ran on.

And now she began to wonder, for Fair Brother was running the way that she knew well—towards the tree from which she had cut the two strips of bark. Her feet were failing her; she knew that she could run no more. Just as they came together in sight of the birch-tree Little Sister stumbled and fell.

She saw Fair Brother run on and strike with his hands and feet against the tree, and cry, "Oh, White Birch, White Birch, lift the latch up, or she will catch me!" And at once the tree opened its rind, and Fair Brother ran in.

"So," said Little Sister, "you are there, are you, Brother? I know, then, what I have done to you."

She went and laid her ear to the tree, and inside she could hear Fair Brother sobbing and crying. It sounded to her as if White Birch were beating him.

"Well, well, Fair Brother, she shall not beat you for long!" said Little Sister.

She went home and waited till the next full moon had come. Then, as soon as it was dark, she went along through the wood until she came

to the place, and there she crept close to the white birch-tree and waited.

Presently she heard Fair Brother's voice come faintly out of the heart of the tree: "White Birch, it is the full moon and the hour in which Little Sister gave life to my feet. For one hour give me leave to go, that I may run home and look at her while she sleeps. I will not stop or speak, and I promise you that I will return."

Then she heard the voice of White Birch answer grudgingly: "It is her hour and I cannot hold you, therefore you may go. Only when you come again I will beat you."

Then the tree opened a little way, and Fair Brother ran out. He ran so quickly in his eager haste that Little Sister had not time to catch him, and she did not dare to call aloud. "I must make sure," she said to herself, "before he comes back. To-night White Birch will have to let him go."

So she gathered as many dry pieces of wood as she could find, and made them into a pile near at hand; and setting them alight, she soon had a brisk fire burning.

Before long she heard the sound of feet in the brushwood, and there came Fair Brother, running as hard as he could go, with the breath sobbing in and out of his body.

Little Sister sprang out to meet him, but as soon as he saw her he beat with his hands and feet against the tree, crying, "White Birch, White Birch, lift the latch up, or she will catch me!"

But before the tree could open Little Sister had caught hold of the birch shoes, and pulled them off

his feet, and running towards the fire she thrust them into the red heart of the embers.

The white birch shivered from head to foot, and broke into lamentable shrieks. The witch thrust her head out of the tree, crying, "Don't, don't! You are burning my skin! Oh, cruel! how you are burning me!"

"I have not burned you enough yet," cried Little Sister; and raking the burning sticks and faggots over the ground, she heaped them round the foot of the white birch-tree, whipping the flames to make them leap high.

The witch drew in her head, but inside she could be heard screaming. As the flames licked the white bark she cried, "Oh, my skin! You are burning my skin. My beautiful white skin will be covered with nothing but blisters. Do you know that you are ruining my complexion?"

But Little Sister said, "If I make you ugly you will not be able to show your face again to deceive the innocent, and to ruin hearts that were happy."

So she piled on sticks and faggots till the outside of the birch-tree was all black and scarred and covered with blisters, the marks of which have remained to this day. And inside, the witch could be heard dancing time to the music of the flames, and crying because of her ruined complexion.

Then Little Sister stooped and took up Fair Brother in her arms. "You cannot walk now," she whispered, "I have taken away your feet; so I will carry you."

He was so starved and thin that he was not very heavy, and all the long way home Little Sister car-

ried him in her arms. How happy they were, looking in each other's eyes by the clear light of the moon!

"Can you ever be happy again in the old way?" asked Little Sister. "Shall you not want to run?"

"No," answered Fair Brother; "I shall never wish to run again. And as for the rest"—he stroked her head softly—"why, I can feel that your hair is growing—it is ever so long, and I can see the wind lifting it. White Birch has no hair of her own, but she has some that she wears, just the same colour as yours."

THE LUCK OF THE ROSES

NOT far from a great town, in the midst of a well-wooded valley, lived a rose-gardener and his wife. All round the old home green sleepy hollows lay girdled by silver streams, long grasses bent softly in the wind, and the half fabulous murmur of woods filled the air.

Up in their rose-garden, on the valley's side facing the sun, the gardener and his wife lived contentedly sharing toil and ease. They had been young, they were not yet old; and though they had to be frugal they did not call themselves poor. A strange fortune had belonged always to the plot of ground over which they laboured; whether because the soil was so rich, or the place so sheltered from cold, or the gardener so skilled in the craft, which had come down in his family from father to son, could not be known; but certainly it was true that his rose-trees gave forth better bloom and bore earlier and later through the season than any others that were to be found in those parts.

The good couple accepted what came to them, simply and gladly, thanking God. Perhaps it was from the kindness of fortune, or perhaps because the sweet perfume of the roses had mixed itself in their blood, that her man and his wife were so sweet-tempered and gentle in their ways. The colour of the rose was in their faces, and the colour of the rose was in their hearts; to her man she was the most

beautiful and dearest of sweethearts, to his wife he was the best and kindest of lovers.

Every morning, before it was light, her man and his wife would go into the garden and gather all the roses that were ripe for sale; then with full baskets on their backs they would set out, and get to the market just as the level sunbeams from the east were striking all the vanes and spires of the city into gold. There they would dispose of their flowers to the florists and salesmen of the town, and after that trudge home again to hoe, and dig, and weed, and water, and prune, and plant for the rest of the day. No man ever saw them the one without the other, and the thought that such a thing might some day happen was the only fear and sorrow of their lives.

That they had no children of their own was scarcely a sorrow to them. "It seems to me," said her man after they had been married for some years, "that God means that our roses are to be our children since He has made us love them so much. They will last when we are grown grey, and will support and comfort us in our old age."

All the roses they had were red, and varied little in kind, yet her man and his wife had a name for each of them; to every tree they had given a name, until it almost seemed that the trees knew, and tried to answer when they heard the voices which spoke to them.

"Jane Janet, and you ought to blossom more freely at your age!" his wife might say to one some evening as she went round and watered the flowers; and the next day, when the two came to their dark morning's gathering, Jane Janet would show ten or

twelve great blooms under the light of the lantern, every one of them the birth of a single night.

"Mary Maudlin," the gardener would say, as he washed the blight off a favourite rose, "to be sure, you are very beautiful, but did I not love you so, you were more trouble than all your sisters put together." And then all at once great dew-drops would come tumbling down out of Mary Maudlin's eyes at the tender words of his reproach. So day by day the companionable feet of the happy couple moved to and fro, always intent on the nurture and care of their children.

In their garden they had bees too, who by strange art, unlike other bees, drew all their honey from the roses, and lived in a cone-thatched hive close to the porch; and that honey was famous through all the country-side, for its flavour was like no other honey made in the world.

Sometimes his wife said to her man, "I think our garden is looked after for us by some good Spirit; perhaps it is the Saints after whom we have named our rose-children."

Her man made answer, "It is rich in years, which, like an old wine, have made it gain in flavour; it has been with us from father to son for three hundred years, and that is a great while."

"A full fairy's lifetime!" said his wife. "'Tis a pity we shall not hand it on, being childless."

"When we two die," said her man, "the roses will make us a grave and watch over us." As he spoke a whole shower of petals fell from the trees.

"Did no one pass, just then?" said his wife.

Now one morning, soon after this, in the late

season of roses, her man had gone before his wife into the garden, gathering for the market in the grey dusk before dawn; and wherever he went moths and beetles came flocking to the light of his lantern, beating against its horn shutters and crying to get in. Out of each rose, as the light fell on it, winged things sprang up into the darkness; but all the roses were bowed and heavy as if with grief. As he picked them from the stem great showers of dew fell out of them, making pools in the hollow of his palm.

There was such a sound of tears that he stopped to listen; and, surely, from all round the garden came the "drip, drip" of falling dew. Yet the pathways under foot were all dry; there had been no rain and but little dew. Whence was it, then, that the roses so shook and sobbed? For under the stems, surely, there was something that sobbed; and suddenly the light of the lantern took hold of a beautiful small figure, about three feet high, dressed in old rose and green, that went languidly from flower to flower. She lifted up such tired hands to draw their heads down to hers; and to each one she kissed she made a weary little sound of farewell, her beautiful face broken up with grief; and now and then out of her lips ran soft chuckling laughter, as if she still meant to be glad, but could not.

The gardener broke into tears to behold a sight so pitiful; and his wife had stolen out silently to his side, and was weeping too.

"Drip, drip," went the roses: wherever she came and kissed, they all began weeping. The gardener and his wife knelt down and watched her; in and out, in and out, not a rose blossom did she miss.

She came nearer and nearer, and at last was standing before them. She seemed hardly able to draw limb after limb, so weak was she; and her filmy garments hung heavy as chains.

A little voice said in their ears, "Kiss me, I am dying!"

They tasted her breath of rose.

"Do not die!" they said simply.

"I have lived three hundred years," she answered. "Now I must die. I am the Luck of the Roses, but I must leave them and die."

"When must you die?" said her man and his wife.

The little lady said: "Before the last roses are over; the chills of night take me, the first frost will kill me. Soon I must die. Now I must dwindle and dwindle, for little life is left to me, and only so can I keep warm. As life and heat grow less, so must I, till presently I am no more."

She was a little thing already—not old, she did not seem old, but delicate as a snowflake, and so weary. She laid her head in the hand of the gardener's wife, and sobbed hard.

"You dear people, who belong so much to me too, I have watched over you."

"Let us watch over you!" said they. They lifted her like a feather-weight, and carried her into the house. There, in the ingle-nook, she sat and shivered, while they brought rose-leaves and piled round her; but every hour she grew less and less.

Presently the sun shone full upon her from the doorway: its light went through her as through

coloured glass; and her man and his wife saw, over the ingle behind her, shadows fluttering as of falling rose-petals: it was the dying rose of her life, falling without end.

All day long she dwindled and grew more weak and frail. Before sunset she was smaller than a small child when it first comes into the world. They set honey before her to taste, but she was too weary to uncurl her tiny hands: they lay like two white petals in the green lap of her gown. The half-filled panniers of roses stood where they had been set down in the porch: the good couple had taken nothing to the market that day. The luck of the house lay dying, for all their care; they could but sit and watch.

When the sun had set, she faded away fast: now she was as small as a young wren. The gardener's wife took her and held her for warmth in the hollow of her hand. Presently she seemed no more than a grasshopper: the tiny chirrup of her voice was heard, about the middle of the night, asking them to take her and lay her among the roses, in the heart of one of the red roses, that there she and death might meet sweetly at the last.

They went together into the dark night, and felt their way among the roses; presently they quite lost her tiny form: she had slipped away into the heart of a Jane Janet rose.

The gardener and his wife went back into the house and sat waiting: they did not know for what, but they were too sad at heart to think just then of sleep.

Soon the first greys of morning began to steal

over the world; pale shivers ran across the sky, and one bird chirped in its sleep among the trees.

All at once there rang a soft sound of lamentation among the roses in the rose-garden; again and again, like the cry of many gentle wounded things in pain. The gardener and his wife went and opened the door: they had to tell the bees of the fairy's death. They looked out under the twilight, into the garden they loved. "Drip," "drip," "drip" came the sound of steady weeping under the leaves. Peering out through the shadows they saw all the rose-trees rocking softly for grief.

"Snow?" said his wife to her man.

But it was not snow.

Under the dawn all the roses in the garden had turned white; for they knew that the fairy was dead.

The gardener and his wife woke the bees, and told them of the fairy's death; then they looked in each other's faces, and saw that they, too, had become white and grey.

With gentle eyes the old couple took hands, and went down into the garden to gather white roses for the market.

THE WHITE DOE

ONE day, as the king's huntsman was riding in the forest, he came to a small pool. Fallen leaves covering its surface had given it the colour of blood, and knee-deep in their midst stood a milk-white doe drinking.

The beauty of the doe set fire to the huntsman's soul; he took an arrow and aimed well at the wild heart of the creature. But as he was loosing the string the branch of a tree overhanging the pool struck him across the face, and caught hold of him by the hair; and arrow and doe vanished away together into the depths of the forest.

Never until now, since he entered the king's service, had the huntsman missed his aim. The thought of the white doe living after he had willed its death inflamed him with rage; he could not rest till he had brought hounds to the trail, determined to follow until it had surrendered to him its life.

All day, while he hunted, the woods stayed breathless, as if to watch; not a blade moved, not a leaf fell. About noon a red deer crossed his path; but he paid no heed, keeping his hounds only to the white doe's trail.

At sunset a fallow deer came to disturb the scent, and through the twilight, as it deepened, a grey wolf ran in and out of the underwood. When night came down, his hounds fled from his call,

following through tangled thickets a huge black boar with crescent tusks. So he found himself alone, with his horse so weary that it could scarcely move.

But still, though the moon was slow in its rising, the fever of the chase burned in the huntsman's veins, and caused him to press on. For now he found himself at the rocky entrance of a ravine whence no way led; and the white doe being still before him, he made sure that he would get her at last. So when his horse fell, too tired to rise again, he dismounted and forced his way on; and soon he saw before him the white doe, labouring up an ascent of sharp crags, while closer and higher the rocks rose and narrowed on every side. Presently she had leapt high upon a boulder that shook and swayed as her feet rested, and ahead the wall of rocks had joined so that there was nowhere farther that she might go.

Then the huntsman notched an arrow, and drew with full strength, and let it go. Fast and straight it went, and the wind screamed in the red feathers as they flew; but faster the doe overleapt his aim, and, spurning the stone beneath, down the rough-bouldered gully sent it thundering, shivering to fragments as it fell. Scarcely might the huntsman escape death as the great mass swept past: but when the danger was over he looked ahead, and saw plainly, where the stone had once stood, a narrow opening in the rock, and a clear gleam of moonlight beyond.

That way he went, and passing through, came upon a green field, as full of flowers as a garden,

duskily shining now, and with dark shadows in all its folds. Round it in a great circle the rocks made a high wall, so high that along their crest forest-trees as they clung to look over seemed but as low-growing thickets against the sky.

The huntsman's feet stumbled in shadow and trod through thick grass into a quick-flowing streamlet that ran through the narrow way by which he had entered. He threw himself down into its cool bed, and drank till he could drink no more. When he rose he saw, a little way off, a small dwelling-house of rough stone, moss-covered and cosy, with a roof of wattles which had taken root and pushed small shoots and clusters of grey leaves through their weaving. Nature, and not man, seemed there to have been building herself an abode.

Before the doorway ran the stream, a track of white mist showing where it wound over the meadow; and by its edge a beautiful maiden sat, and was washing her milk-white feet and arms in the wrinkling eddies.

To the huntsman she became all at once the most beautiful thing that the world contained; all the spirit of the chase seemed to be in her blood, and each little movement of her feet made his heart jump for joy. "I have looked for you all my life!" thought he, as he halted and gazed, not daring to speak lest the lovely vision should vanish, and the memory of it mock him for ever.

The beautiful maiden looked up from her washing. "Why have you come here?" said she.

The huntsman answered her as he believed to be the truth, "I have come because I love you!"

"No," she said, "you came because you wanted to kill the white doe. If you wish to kill her, it is not likely that you can love me."

"I do not wish to kill the white doe!" cried the huntsman; "I had not seen you when I wished that. If you do not believe that I love you, take my bow and shoot me to the heart; for I will never go away from you now."

At his word she took one of the arrows, looking curiously at the red feathers, and to test the sharp point she pressed it against her breast. "Have a care!" cried the hunter, snatching it back. He drew his breath sharply and stared. "It is strange," he declared; "a moment ago I almost thought that I saw the white doe."

"If you stay here to-night," said the maiden, "about midnight you will see the white doe go by. Take this arrow, and have your bow ready, and watch! And if to-morrow, when I return, the arrow is still unused in your hand, I will believe you when you say that you love me. And you have only to ask, and I will do all that you desire."

Then she gave the huntsman food and drink and a bed of ferns upon which to rest. "Sleep or wake," said she as she parted from him; "if truly you have no wish to kill the white doe, why should you wake? Sleep!"

"I do not wish to kill the white doe," said the huntsman. Yet he could not sleep: the memory

of the one wild creature which had escaped him stung his blood. He looked at the arrow which he held ready, and grew thirsty at the sight of it. "If I see, I must shoot!" cried his hunter's heart. "If I see, I must not shoot!" cried his soul, smitten with love for the beautiful maiden, and remembering her word. "Yet, if I see, I know I must shoot—so shall I lose all!" he cried as midnight approached, and the fever of long waiting remained unassuaged.

Then with a sudden will he drew out his hunting-knife, and scored the palms of his two hands so deeply that he could no longer hold his bow or draw the arrow upon the string. "Oh, fair one, I have kept my word to you!" he cried as midnight came. "The bow and the arrow are both ready."

Looking forth from the threshold by which he lay, he saw pale moonlight and mist making a white haze together on the outer air. The white doe ran by, a body of silver; like quicksilver she ran. And the huntsman, the passion to slay rousing his blood, caught up arrow and bow, and tried in vain with his maimed hands to notch the shaft upon the string.

The beautiful creature leapt lightly by, between the curtains of moonbeam and mist; and as she went she sprang this way and that across the narrow streamlet, till the pale shadows hid her altogether from his sight. "Ah! ah!" cried the huntsman, "I would have given all my life to be able to shoot then! I am the most miserable man alive; but to-morrow I will be the happiest. What a thing is

love, that it has known how to conquer in me even my hunter's blood!"

In the morning the beautiful maiden returned; she came sadly. "I gave you my word," said she: "here I am. If you have the arrow still with you as it was last night, I will be your wife, because you have done what never huntsman before was able to do—not to shoot at the white doe when it went by."

The huntsman showed her the unused arrow; her beauty made him altogether happy. He caught her in his arms, and kissed her till the sun grew high. Then she brought food and set it before him; and taking his hand, "I am your wife," said she, "and with all my heart my will is to serve you faithfully. Only, if you value your happiness, do not shoot ever at the white doe." Then she saw that there was blood on his hand, and her face grew troubled. She saw how the other hand also was wounded. "How came this?" she asked; "dear husband, you were not so hurt yesterday."

And the huntsman answered, "I did it for fear lest in the night I should fail, and shoot at the white doe when it came."

Hearing that, his wife trembled and grew white. "You have tricked us both," she said, "and have not truly mastered your desire. Now, if you do not promise me on your life and your soul, or whatever is dearer, never to shoot at a white doe, sorrow will surely come of it. Promise me, and you shall certainly be happy!"

So the huntsman promised faithfully, saying, "On your life, which is dearer to me than my

own, I give you my word to keep that it shall be so." Then she kissed him, and bound up his wounds with healing herbs; and to look at her all that day, and for many days after, was better to him than all the hunting the king's forest could provide.

For a whole year they lived together in perfect happiness, and two children came to bless their union—a boy and a girl born at the same hour. When they were but a month old they could run; and to see them leaping and playing before the door of their home made the huntsman's heart jump for joy. "They are forest-born, and they come of a hunter's blood; that is why they run so early, and have such limbs," said he.

"Yes," answered his wife, "that is partly why. When they grow older they will run so fast—do not mistake them for deer if ever you go hunting."

No sooner had she said the word than the memory of it, which had slept for a whole year, stirred his blood. The scent of the forest blew up through the rocky ravine, which he had never repassed since the day when he entered, and he laid his hands thoughtfully on the weapons he no longer used.

Such restlessness took hold of him all that day that at night he slept ill, and, waking, found himself alone with no wife at his side. Gazing about the room, he saw that the cradle also was empty. "Why," he wondered, "have they gone out together in the middle of the night?"

Yet he gave it little more thought, and turning

over, fell into a troubled sleep, and dreamed of hunting and of the white doe that he had seen a year before stooping to drink among the red leaves that covered the forest pool.

In the morning his wife was by his side, and the little ones lay asleep upon their crib. "Where were you," he asked, "last night? I woke, and you were not here."

His wife looked at him tenderly, and sighed. "You should shut your eyes better," said she. "I went out to see the white doe, and the little ones came also. Once a year I see her; it is a thing I must not miss."

The beauty of the white doe was like strong drink to his memory: the beautiful limbs that had leapt so fast and escaped—they alone, of all the wild life in the world, had conquered him. "Ah!" he cried, "let me see her, too; let her come tame to my hand, and I will not hurt her!"

His wife answered: "The heart of the white doe is too wild a thing; she cannot come tame to the hand of any hunter under heaven. Sleep again, dear husband, and wake well! For a whole year you have been sufficiently happy; the white doe would only wound you again in your two hands."

When his wife was not by, the hunter took the two children upon his knee, and said, "Tell me, what was the white doe like? what did she do? and what way did she go?"

The children sprang off his knee, and leapt to and fro over the stream. "She was like this," they cried,

" and she did this, and this was the way she went ! " At that the hunter drew his hand over his brow. " Ah," he said, " I seemed then almost to see the white doe."

Little peace had he from that day. Whenever his wife was not there he would call the little ones to him, and cry, " Show me the white doe and what she did." And the children would leap and spring this way and that over the little stream before the door, crying, " She was like this, and she did this, and this was the way she went ! "

The huntsman loved his wife and children with a deep affection, yet he began to have a dread that there was something hidden from his eyes which he wished yet feared to know. " Tell me," he cried one day, half in wrath, when the fever of the white doe burned more than ever in his blood, " tell me where the white doe lives, and why she comes, and when next. For this time I must see her, or I shall die of the longing that has hold of me ! " Then, when his wife would give no answer, he seized his bow and arrows and rushed out into the forest, which for a whole year had not known him, slaying all the red deer he could find.

Many he slew in his passion, but he brought none of them home, for before the end a strange discovery came to him, and he stood amazed, dropping the haunch which he had cut from his last victim. " It is a whole year," he said to himself, " that I have not tasted meat ; I, a hunter, who love only the meat that I kill ! "

Returning home late, he found his wife troubling her heart over his long absence. "Where have you been?" she asked him, and the question inflamed him into a fresh passion.

"I have been out hunting for the white doe," he cried; "and she carries a spot in her side where some day my arrow must enter. If I do not find her I shall die!"

His wife looked at him long and sorrowfully; then she said: "On your life and soul be it, and on mine also, that your anger makes me tell what I would have kept hidden. It is to-night that she comes. Now it remains for you to remember your word once given to me!"

"Give it back to me!" he cried; "it is my fate to finish the quest of the white doe."

"If I give it," said she, "your happiness goes with it, and mine, and that of our children."

"Give it back to me!" he said again; "I cannot live unless I may master the white doe! If she will come tame to my hand, no harm shall happen to her."

And when she denied him again, he gave her his bow and arrows, and bade her shoot him to the heart, since without his word rendered back to him he could not live.

Then his wife took both his hands and kissed them tenderly, and with loud weeping quickly set him free of his promise. "As well," said she, "ask the hunter to go bound to the lion's den as the white doe to come tame into your keeping; though she loved you with all her heart, you could not look at her and not be her enemy." She gazed on him with

full affection, and sighed deeply. "Lie down for a little," she said, "and rest; it is not till midnight that she comes. When she comes I will wake you."

She took his head in her hands and set it upon her knee, making him lie down. "If she will come and stand tame to my hand," he said again, "then I will do her no harm."

After a while he fell asleep; and, dreaming of the white doe, started awake to find it was already midnight, and the white doe standing there before him. But as soon as his eyes lighted on her they kindled with such fierce ardour that she trembled and sprang away out of the door and across the stream. "Ah, ah, white doe, white doe!" cried the wind in the feathers of the shaft that flew after her.

Just at her leaping of the stream the arrow touched her; and all her body seemed to become a mist that dissolved and floated away, broken into thin fragments over the fast-flowing stream.

By the hunter's side his wife lay dead, with an arrow struck into her heart. The door of the house was shut; it seemed to be only an evil dream from which he had suddenly awakened. But the arrow gave real substance to his hand: when he drew it out a few true drops of blood flowed after. Suddenly the hunter knew all he had done. "Oh, white doe, white doe!" he cried, and fell down with his face to hers.

At the first light of dawn he covered her with dry ferns, that the children might not see how she lay there dead. "Run out," he cried to them,

" run out and play! Play as the white doe used to do!" And the children ran out and leapt this way and that across the stream, crying, " She was like this, and she did this, and this was the way she went!"

So while they played along the banks of the stream, the hunter took up his beautiful dead wife and buried her. And to the children he said, " Your mother has gone away; when the white doe comes she will return also."

" She was like this," they cried, laughing and playing, " and she did this, and this was the way she went!" And all the time as they played he seemed to see the white doe leaping before him in the sunlight.

That night the hunter lay sleepless on his bed, wishing for the world to end; but in the crib by his side the two children lay in a sound slumber. Then he saw plainly in the moonlight, the white doe with a red mark in her side, standing still by the doorway. Soon she went to where the young ones were lying, and, as she touched the coverlet softly with her right fore-foot, all at once two young fawns rose up from the ground and sprang away into the open, following where the white doe beckoned them.

Nor did they ever return. For the rest of his life the huntsman stayed where they left him, a sorrowful and lonely man. In the grave where lay the woman's form he had slain he buried his bow and arrows far from the sight of the sun or the reach of his own hand; and coming to the place night by night, he would watch the mists and the

moonrise, and cry, " White doe, white doe, will you not some day forgive me ? " and did not know that she had forgiven him then when, before she died, she kissed his two hands and made him sleep for the last time with his head on her knee.

THE MOON-STROKE

IN the hollow heart of an old tree a Jackdaw and his wife had made themselves a nest. As soon as the mother of his eggs had finished laying, she sat waiting patiently for something to come of it. One by one five mouths poked out of the shells, demanding to be fed; so for weeks the happy couple had to be continually in two places at once searching for food to satisfy them.

Presently the wings of the young ones grew strong; they could begin to fly about; and the parents found time for a return to pleasuring and curiosity-hunting. They began gathering in a wise assortment of broken glass and chips of platter to grace the corners of their dwelling. All but the youngest Jackdaw were enchanted with their unutterable beauty and value; they were never tired of quarrelling over the possession and arrangement of them.

"But what are they for?" asked the youngest, a perverse bird who kept himself apart from the rest, and took no share in their daily squabblings.

The mother-bird said: "They are beautiful, and what God intended for us: therefore they must be true. We may not see the use of them yet, but no doubt some day they will come true."

The little Jackdaw said: "Their corners scratch me when I want to go to sleep; they are far worse than crumbs in the bed. All the other birds do without them—why should not we?"

"That is what distinguishes us from the other birds!" replied the Janedaw, and thanked her stars that it was so.

"I wish we could sing!" sighed the littlest young Jackdaw.

"Babble, babble!" replied his mother angrily.

And then, as it was dinner-time, he forgot his grief, as they all said grace and fell-to.

One evening the old Jackdaw came home very late, carrying something that burned bright and green, like an evening star; all the nest shone where he set it down.

"What do you think of that for a discovery?" he said to the Janedaw.

"Think?" she said; "I can't. Some of it looks good to eat; but that fire-patch at the end would burn one's inside out."

Presently the Jackdaw family settled itself down to sleep; only the youngest one sat up and watched. Now he had seen something beautiful. Was it going to come true? Its light was like the song of the nightingale in the leaves overhead: it glowed, and throbbed, and grew strong, flooding the whole place where it lay.

Soon, in the silence, he heard a little wail of grief: "Why have they carried me away here," sighed the glow-worm, "out of the tender grass that loves the ground?"

The littlest Jackdaw listened with all his heart. Now something at last was going to become true, without scratching his legs and making him feel as though crumbs were in his bed.

A little winged thing came flying down to the

green light, and two voices began crying together —the glow-worm and its mate.

"They have carried you away?"

"They have carried me away; up here I shall die!"

"I am too weak to lift you," said the one with wings; "you will stay here, and you will die!" Then they cried yet more.

"It seems to me," thought the Jackdaw, "that as soon as the beautiful becomes true, God does not intend it to be for us." He got up softly from among his brothers. I will carry you down," he said. And without more ado, he picked it up and carried it down out of the nest, and laid it in the long grass at the foot of the tree.

Overhead the nightingale sang, and the full moon shone; its rays struck down on the little Jackdaw's head.

For a bird that is not a nightingale to wake up and find its head unprotected under the rays of a full moon is serious: there and then he became moon-struck. He went back into bed; but he was no longer the same little Jackdaw. "Oh, I wish I could sing!" he thought; and not for hours could he get to sleep.

In the morning, when the family woke up, the beautiful and the true was gone. The father Jackdaw thought he must have swallowed it in his sleep.

"If you did," said his wife, "there'll be a smell of burnt feathers before long!"

But the littlest Jackdaw said, "It came true, and went away, because it was never intended for us."

Now some days after this the old Jackdaw again

came carrying something that shone like an evening star—a little spike of gold with a burning emerald set in the end of it. "And what do you think of that?" said he to his wife.

"I daren't come near it," she answered, "for fear it should burn me!"

That night the little Jackdaw lay awake, while all the others slept, waiting to hear the green stone break out into sorrow, and to see if its winged mate would come seeking it. But after hours had gone, and nothing stirred or spoke, he slipped softly out of the nest, and went down to search for the poor little winged mate who must surely be about somewhere.

And now, truly, among the grasses and flowers he heard something sobbing and sighing; a little winged thing darted into sight and out again, searching the ground like a dragon-fly at quest. And all the time, amid the darting and humming of its wings, came sobbing and wringing of hands.

The young Jackdaw called: "Little wings, what have you lost? Is it not a spike with a green light at the end of it?"

"My wand, my wand!" cried the fairy, beside herself with grief. "Just about sunset I was asleep in an empty wren's nest, and when I woke up my wand was gone!"

Then the little Jackdaw, being moon-struck, and not knowing the value of things, flew up to the nest and brought back the fairy her wand.

"Oh!" she cried, "you have saved my life!" And she thanked the Jackdaw till he grew quite modest and shy.

"What is it for? What can you do with it?" he asked.

"With this," she answered, "I can make anything beautiful come true! I can give you whatever you ask; you have but to ask, and you shall have."

Then the little Jackdaw, being moon-struck, and not knowing the value of things, said, "Oh, if I could only sing like a nightingale!"

"You can!" said the fairy, waving her wand but once; and immediately something like a melodious sneeze flew into his head and set it shaking.

"Chiou! chiou! True-true-true-true! Jug! jug! Oh, beautiful! beautiful!" His beak went dabbling in the sweet sound, rippling it this way and that, spraying it abroad out of his blissful heart as a jewel throws out its fires.

The fairy was gone; but the little Jackdaw sprang up into the high elm, and sang on endlessly through the whole night.

At dawn he stopped, and looking down, there he saw the family getting ready for breakfast, and wondering what had become of him.

Just as they were saying grace he flew in, his little heart beating with joy over his new-found treasure. What a jewel of a voice he had: better than all the pieces of glass and chips of platter lying down there in the nest! As soon as the parent-birds had finished grace, he lifted his voice and thanked God that the thing he had wished for had become true.

None of them understood what he said, but they

paid him plenty of attention. All his brothers and sisters put up their heads and giggled, as the young do when one of their number misbehaves.

"Don't make that noise!" said his mother; "it's not decent!"

"It's low!" said the father-bird.

The littlest young Jackdaw was overwhelmed with astonishment. When he tried to explain, his unseemly melodies led to his immediate expulsion from the family circle. Such noises, he was told, could only be made in private; when he had quite got over them he might come back,—but not until.

He never got over them; so he never came back. For a few days he hid himself in different trees of the garden, and sang the praises of sorrow; but his family, though they comprehended him not, recognised his note, and came searching him with beak and claw, and drove him out so as not to have him near them committing such scandalous noises to the ears of the public.

"He lies in his throat!" said the old Jackdaw. "Everything he says he garbles. If he is our son he must have been hatched on the wrong side of the nest!"

After that, wherever he went, all the birds jeered at and persecuted him. Even the nightingales would not listen to his brotherly voice. They made fun of his black coat, and called him a Nonconformist without a conscience. "All this has come about," thought he, "because God never meant anything beautiful to come true."

One day a man who saw him and heard him singing, caught him, and took him round the world in a

cage for show. The value of him was discovered. Great crowds came to see the little Jackdaw, and to hear him sing. He was described now as the "Amphabulous Philomel, or the Mongrel-Minstrel"; but it gave him no joy.

Before long he had become what we call tame—that is to say, his wings had been clipped; he was allowed out of his cage, because he could no longer fly away, and he sang when he was told, because he was whipped if he did not.

One day there was a great crowd round the travelling booth where he was on view: the showman had a new wonder which he was about to show to the people. He took the little Jackdaw out of his cage, and set him to perch upon his shoulder, while he busied himself over something which he was taking carefully out of ever so many boxes and coverings.

The Jackdaw's sad eye became attracted by a splendid scarf-pin that the showman wore—a gold pin set with a tiny emerald that burned like fire. The bird thought, "Now if only the beautiful could become true!"

And now the showman began holding up a small glass bottle for the crowd to stare into. The people were pushing this way and that to see what might be there.

At the bottom sat the little fairy, without her wand, weeping and beating her hands on the glass.

The showman was so proud he grew red in the face, and ran shouting up and down the plank, shaking and turning the bottle upside down now and then, so as to make the cabined fairy use her wings, and buzz like a fly against the glass.

The Jackdaw waggled unsteadily at his perch on the man's shoulder. "Look at him!" laughed someone in the crowd, "he's going to steal his master's scarf-pin."

"Ho, ho, ho!" shouted the showman. "See this bird now! See the marvellous mongrel nature of the beast! Who tells me he's only a nightingale painted black?"

The people laughed the more at that, for there was a fellow in the crowd looking sheepish. The Jackdaw had drawn out the scarf-pin, and held it gravely in its beak, looking sideways with cunning eyes. He was wishing hard. All the crowd laughed again.

Suddenly the showman's hand gave a jerk, the bottle slipped from his hold and fell, shivering itself upon the ground.

There was a buzz of wings—the fairy had escaped.

"The beautiful is coming true," thought the Jackdaw, as he yielded to the fairy her wand, and found, suddenly, that his wings were not clipped after all.

"What more can I do for you?" asked the fairy, as they flew away together. "You gave me back my wand; I have given you back your wings."

"I will not ask anything," said the little Jackdaw; "what God intends will come true."

"Let me take you up to the moon," said the fairy. "All the Jackdaws up there sing like nightingales."

"Why is that?" asked the little Jackdaw.

"Because they are all moon-struck," she answered.

"And what is it to be moon-struck?" he asked.

" Surely you should know, if anyone ! " laughed the fairy. " To see things beautifully, and not as they are. On the moon you will be able to do that without any difficulty."

" Ah," said the little Jackdaw, " now I know at last that the beautiful is going to come true ! "

THE GENTLE COCKATRICE

FAR above the terraces of vine, where the goat pastures ended and the rocks began, the eye could take a clear view over the whole plain. From that point the world below spread itself out like a green map, and the only walls one could see were the white flanks and tower of the cathedral rising up from the grey roofs of the city; as for the streets, they seemed to be but narrow foot-tracks on which people appeared like ants walking.

This was the view of the town which Beppo, the son of the common hangman, loved best. It was little pleasure to him to be down there, where all the other lads drove him from their play: for the hangman had had too much to do with the fathers and brothers of some of them, and his son was not popular. When there was a hanging they would rush off to the public square to see it; afterwards they made it their sport to play at hanging Beppo, if by chance they could catch him; and that play had a way at times of coming uncomfortably near to reality.

Beppo did not himself go to the square when his father's trade was on; the near view did not please him. Perched on the rocky hillside, he would look down upon a gathering of black specks, where two others stood detached upon a space in their midst, and would know that there his father was hanging a man.

Sometimes it was more than one, and that made Beppo afraid. For he knew that for every man that

he hanged his father took a dram to give him courage for the work; and if there were several poor fellows to be cast off from life, the hangman was not pleasant company afterwards for those very near and dear to him.

It happened one day that the hangman was to give the rope to five fellows, the most popular and devil-may-care rakes and roysterers in the whole town. Beppo was up very early that morning, and at the first streak of light had dropped himself over the wall into the town ditch, and was away for the open country and the free air of the hills; for he knew that neither at home nor in the streets would life be worth living for a week after, because of all the vengeances that would fall on him.

Therefore he had taken from the home larder a loaf of bread and a clump of dried figs; and with these hoped to stand the siege of a week's solitude rather than fall in with the hard dealings of his own kind. He knew a cave, above where the goats found pasture, out of which a little red, rusty water trickled; there he thought to make himself a castle and dream dreams, and was sure he would be happy enough, if only he did not grow afraid.

Beppo had discovered the cave one day from seeing a goat push out through a thicket of creepers on the side of the hill; and, hidden under their leaves, he had found it a wonderful, cool refuge from the heat of summer noons. Now, as he entered, the place struck very cold; for it was early spring, and the earth was not yet warmed through with the sun. So he set himself to gather dead grass, and briers, and tufts of goat's hair and from farther

down the hillside the wood of a ruined goat-paddock, till he had a great store of fuel at hand. He worked all day like a squirrel for its winter hoard; and as his pile mounted he grew less and less afraid of the cave where he meant to live.

Seeing so large a heap of stuff ready for the feeding of his fire, he began to rise to great heights in his own imagination. First he had been a poor outlaw, a mere sheep-stealer hiding from men's clutches; then he became a robber-chief; and at last he was no less than the king of the mountains.

"This mountain is all caves," he said to himself, "and all the caves are full of gold; and I am the king to whom it all belongs."

In the evening Beppo lighted his fire, in the far back of his cave, where its light would not be seen, and sat down by its warmth to eat dried figs and bread and drink brackish water. To-morrow he meant to catch a kid and roast it and eat it. Why should he ever go home again? Kid was good—he did not get that to eat when he was at home; and now in the streets the boys must be looking for him to play at their cruel game of hanging. Why should he go back at all?

The fire licked its way up the long walls of the cavern; slowly the warmth crept round on all sides. The rock where Beppo laid his hand was no longer damp and cold; he made himself a bed of the dried litter in a niche close to the fire, laid his head on a smooth knob of stone, and slept. But even in his sleep he remembered his fire, dreading to awake and find himself in darkness. Every time the warmth of it diminished he raised himself and put on more fuel.

In the morning—for faint blue edges of light marking the ridged throat of the cavern told that outside the day had begun—he woke fully, and the fire still burned. As he lay, his pillow of rock felt warm and almost soft; and, strangely enough, through it there went a beating sound as of blood. This must be his own brain that he heard; but he lifted his head, and where he laid his hand could feel a slow movement of life going on under it. Then he stared hard at the overhanging rock, and surely it heaved softly up and down, like some great thing breathing slowly in its sleep.

Yet he could make out no shape at all till, having run to the other side of the cave, he turned to see the whole face of the rock which seemed to be taking on life. Then he realised very gradually what looked to be the throat and jaws of a great monster lying along the ground, while all the rest passed away into shadow or lay buried under masses of rock, which closed round it like a mould. Below the nether-jaw bone the flames licked and caressed the throat; and the tough, mud-coloured hide ruffled and smoothed again as if grateful for the heat that tickled its way in.

Very slowly indeed the great Cockatrice, which had lain buried for thousands of years, out of reach of the light or heat of the sun, was coming round again to life. That was Beppo's own doing, and for some very curious reason he was not afraid.

His heart was uplifted. "This is my cave," thought he, "so this must be my Cockatrice! Now I will ride out on him and conquer the world. I shall be really a king then!"

He guessed that it must have been the warmth which had waked the Cockatrice, so he made fires all down the side of the cave; wherever the great flank of the Cockatrice seemed to show, there he lighted a fire to put heat into the slumbering body of the beast.

"Warm up, old fellow," he cried; "thaw out, I tell you! I want you to talk to me."

Presently the mouth of the Cockatrice unsealed itself, and began to babble of green fields. "Hay —I want hay!" said the Cockatrice; "or grass. Does the world contain any grass?"

Beppo went out, and presently returned with an armful. Very slowly the Cockatrice began munching the fresh fodder, and Beppo, intent on feeding him back to life, ran to and fro between the hillside and the cavern till he was exhausted and could go no more. He sat down and watched the Cockatrice finish his meal.

Presently, when the monster found that his fodder was at an end, he puckered a great lid, and far up aloft in the wall of the cave flashed out a green eye.

If all the emeralds in the world were gathered together, they might shine like that; if all the glow-worms came up out of the fields and put their tails together, they might make as great an orb of fire. All the cave looked as green as grass when the eye of the Cockatrice lighted on it; and Beppo, seeing so mighty an optic turning its rays on him, felt all at once shrivelled and small, and very weak at the knees.

"Oh, Cockatrice," he said, in a monstrous sad voice, "I hope I haven't hurt you!"

"On the contrary," said the Cockatrice, "you have done me much good. What are you going to do with me now?"

"*I* do with *you*?" cried Beppo, astonished at so wild a possibility offering to come true. "I would like to get you out, of course—but can I?"

"I would like that dearly also!" said the Cockatrice.

"But how can I?" inquired Beppo.

"Keep me warm and feed me," returned the monster. "Presently I shall be able to find out where my tail is. When I can move that I shall be able to get out."

Beppo undertook whatever the Cockatrice told him—it was so grand to have a Cockatrice of his own. But it was a hard life, stoking up fires day and night, and bringing the Cockatrice the fodder necessary to replenish his drowsy being. When Beppo was quite tired out he would come and lay his head against the monster's snout: and the Cockatrice would open a benevolent eye and look at him affectionately.

"Dear Cockatrice," said the boy one day, "tell me about yourself, and how you lived and what the world was like when you were free!"

"Do you see any green in my eye?" said the Cockatrice.

"I do, indeed!" said Beppo. "I never saw anything so green in all the world."

"That's all right, then!" said the Cockatrice. "Climb up and look in, and you will see what the world was like when I was young."

So Beppo climbed and scrambled, and slipped and clung, till he found himself on the margin of a wonderful green lake, which was but the opening into the whole eye of the Cockatrice.

And as soon as Beppo looked, he had lost his heart for ever to the world he saw there. It was there, quite real before him: a whole world full of living and moving things—the world before the trouble of man came to it.

"I see green hills, and fields, and rocks, and trees," cried Beppo, "and among them a lot of little Cockatrices are playing!"

"They were my brothers and sisters; I remember them," said the Cockatrice. "I have them all in my mind's eye. Call them—perhaps they will come and talk to you; you will find them very nice and friendly."

"They are too far off," said Beppo, "they cannot hear me."

"Ah, yes," murmured the Cockatrice, "memory is a wonderful thing!"

When Beppo came down again he was quite giddy, and lost in wonder and joy over the beautiful green world the Cockatrice had shown him. "I like that better than this!" said he.

"So do I," said the Cockatrice. "But perhaps, when my tail gets free, I shall feel better."

One morning he said to Beppo: "I do really begin to feel my tail. It is somewhere away down the hill yonder. Go and look out for me, and tell me if you can see it moving."

So Beppo went to the mouth of the cave, and looked out towards the city, over all the rocks and

ridges and goat-pastures and slopes of vine that lay between.

Suddenly, as he looked, the steeple of the cathedral tottered, and down fell its weathercock and two of its pinnacles, and half the chimneys of the town snapped off their tops. All that distance away Beppo could hear the terrified screams of the inhabitants as they ran out of their houses in terror.

"I've done it!" cried the Cockatrice, from within the cave.

"But you mustn't do that!" exclaimed Beppo in horror.

"Mustn't do what?" inquired the Cockatrice.

"You mustn't wag your tail! You don't know what you are doing!"

"Oh, master!" wailed the Cockatrice; "mayn't I? For the first time this thousand years I have felt young again."

Beppo was pale and trembling with agitation over the fearful effects of that first tail-wagging. "You mustn't feel young!" said he.

"Why not?" asked the Cockatrice, with a piteous wail.

"There isn't room in the world for a Cockatrice to feel young nowadays," answered Beppo gravely.

"But, dear little master and benefactor," cried the Cockatrice, "what did you wake me up for?"

"I don't know," replied Beppo, terribly perplexed. "I wouldn't have done it had I known where your tail was."

"Where is it?" inquired the Cockatrice, with great interest.

"It's right underneath the city where I mean to be king," said Beppo; "and if you move it the city will come down; and then I shall have nothing to be king of."

"Very well," said the Cockatrice sadly; "I will wait!"

"Wait for what?" thought Beppo. "Waiting won't do any good." And he began to think what he must do. "You lie quite still!" said he to the Cockatrice. "Go to sleep, and I will still look after you."

"Oh, little master," said the Cockatrice, "but it is difficult to go to sleep when the delicious trouble of spring is in one's tail! How long does this city of yours mean to stay there? I am so alive that I find it hard to shut an eye!"

"I will let the fires that keep you warm go down for a bit," said Beppo, "and you mustn't eat so much grass; then you will feel better, and your tail will be less of an anxiety."

And presently, when Beppo had let the fires which warmed him get low, and had let time go by without bringing him any fresh fodder, the Cockatrice dozed off into an uneasy, prehistoric slumber.

Then Beppo, weeping bitterly over his treachery to the poor beast which had trusted him, raked open the fires and stamped out the embers; and, leaving the poor Cockatrice to get cold, ran down the hill as fast as he could to the city he had saved —the city of which he meant to be king.

He had been away a good many days, but the boys in the street were still on the watch for him.

He told them how he had saved the city from the earthquake; and they beat him from the city gate to his father's door. He told his own father how he had saved the city; and his father beat him from his own door to the city gate. Nobody believed him.

He lay outside the town walls till it was dark, all smarting with his aches and pains; then, when nobody could see him, he got up and very miserably made his way back to the cave on the hill. And all the way he said to himself, "Shall I put fire under the Cockatrice once more, and make him shake the town into ruins? Would not that be fine?"

Inside, the cave was quite still and cold, and when he laid his hand on the Cockatrice he could not feel any stir or warmth in its bones. Yet when he called, the Cockatrice just opened a slit of his green eye and looked at him with trust and affection.

"Dear Cockatrice," cried Beppo, "forgive me for all the wrong I have done you!" And as he clambered his way towards the green light, a great tear rolled from under the heavy lid and flowed past him like a cataract.

"Dear Cockatrice," cried Beppo again when he stood on the margin of the green lake, "take me to sleep with you in the land where the Cockatrices are at play, and keep quite still with your tail!"

Slowly and painfully the Cockatrice opened his eye enough to let Beppo slip through; and Beppo saw the green world with its playful cockatrices waiting to welcome him. Then the great eyelid

shut down fast, and the waking days of the Cockatrice were over. And Beppo's native town lay safe, because he had learned from the Cockatrice to be patient and gentle, and had gone to be king of a green world where everything was harmless.

THE GREEN BIRD

THERE was once a Prince whose palace lay in the midst of a wonderful garden. From gate to gate was a day's journey, where spring, summer, and autumn stayed captive; for warm streams flowed, bordering its ways, through marble conduits, and warm winds, driven by brazen fans, blew over it out of great furnaces that were kept alive through the cold of winter. And day by day, when no sun shone in heaven, a ball of golden fire rose from the palace roof and passed down to the west, sustained invisibly in mid-air, and giving light and warmth to the flowers below. And after it by night went a lamp of silver flame, that changed its quarters as the moon changes hers in heaven, and threw a silver light over the lawns and the flowered avenues.

All these things were that the Prince might have delight and beauty ever around him. To his eyes summer was perpetual, without end, and nothing died save to give out new life on the morrow. So through many morrows he lived, and trod the beautiful soft ways devised for him by cunning hands, and did not know that there was winter, or cold, or hunger to be borne in the world, for he never crossed the threshold of his enchanted garden, but stayed lapped in the luxury of its bright colours and soft airs.

One day he was standing by a bed of large white bell-lilies. Their great bowls were full of water, and

inside among the yellow stamens gold fish went darting to and fro. While he watched he saw, mirrored in the water, the breast of a green bird flying towards the trees of the garden.

It had come from a far country surely, for its shape and colour were strange to him; and the most curious thing of all was that it carried its nest in its beak.

Its flight came keen as a sword's edge through those bowery spaces, till its wings closed with a shock that sent the golden fruit tumbling from the branches where it had lodged: and through the whole garden went a crashing sound as of soft thunder.

The Prince waited long, hoping to hear the bird sing, but it hid itself silently among the thickest of the leaves, and never moved or uttered a sound. He went back to the palace a little sorry not to have heard the green bird sing; "But, at least," he said to himself, "I shall hear it to-morrow."

That night he dreamed that something came and tapped at his heart; and that his heart tapped back saying, "Go away, for if I let you in there will be sorrow!"

In the morning on the window-sill he saw a green feather lying; but as he opened the window a puff of wind lifted it, and carried it high up into the air and out of sight.

All that day the Prince saw nothing of the Green Bird, nor heard a note of its singing. "Strange," thought he to himself, "I have never heard its song; yet I know quite well somehow that it sings most beautifully." At dusk, when the lilies began to

close their globes around the gold fish and the yellow stamens, he went back to the palace, and before long to bed, and slept.

Once more he heard in dreams someone come tapping at his heart, and this time his heart said, "Who is there?" Then a voice answered back, "The Green Bird"; but his heart said, "Go away, for if I let you in there will be sorrow?"

Now it had been foretold of the Prince at his birth that if he ever knew sorrow, his wealth, and his estate, and his power would all go from him. Therefore from his childhood he had been shut up in a beautiful palace with miles and miles of enchanted gardens, so that sorrow might not get near him; and it was said that if ever sorrow came to him the palace and the enchanted gardens would suddenly fall into ruin and disappear, and he would be left standing alone to beg his way through the world. Therefore it was for this that his heart said in his dream, "Go away, for if I let you in there will be sorrow!"

In the morning a green feather lay on the window-sill; but as he opened the window the wind took it up and carried it away.

So the next night, as soon as his attendants were gone, the Prince got up softly and opening the window called "Green Bird!"

Then all at once he felt something warm against his heart, and suddenly his heart began to ache: and there was the green bird with its wings spread gently about him, keeping time ever so softly to the beating of his heart.

Then the Prince said, "Beautiful Green Bird, what have you brought me?" and the Green Bird

answered, " I have brought you dreams out of a far-off country of things you never saw; if you will come and sleep in my nest you shall dream them."

So the Prince went out by the window and along the balcony, and so away into the garden and up into the heart of the great tree where the Green Bird had its nest. There he lay down, and the Green Bird spread its wings over him, and he fell fast asleep.

Now as he slept he dreamed that the Green Bird put in his hand three grains of seed saying, " Take these and keep them till you come to the right place to sow them in. And so soon as one is sown, go on till you come to the place where the next must be sown, following the signs which I shall tell you of. Now the first you must not sow till you find yourself in a white country, where the trees and the grass are white." (And the Prince said in his heart, " Where can I find that ? ") " And the second one you must not sow till you see a thing like a tortoise put out a small white hand." (" And where," said the Prince, " can I meet with that wonder ? ") " And when you have seen the second sprout up through the ground, go on till you come again to a land you had lost and the place where you first knew sorrow." (" And what is sorrow ? " said the Prince to his heart.) " Then when you have sown the third seed and watched it sprout you will know perfect happiness, and will be able to hear the song which I sing "

Then the Green Bird lifted its wings and flew away through the night; and out of the darkness

came three notes that filled the Prince with wonderful delight.

But afterwards, when they ceased, came sorrow.

Now, when the Prince woke he was in his own bed; and he rose much puzzled by the dream which had seemed so true. Then there came to him one of his pages who said, "There was a strange bird flying over the palace about dawn, and a watchman on the high tower shot it; so I have brought it for you to see." And as he spoke, the page showed him the Green Bird lying dead between his hands.

The Prince took it without a word, and kissed it before them all, afterwards burying it where the white lilies full of gold fishes grew, wherein he had first seen the image of its green breast fly. And as he stood sorrowing, the garden faded before his eyes, and a cold wind blew; and the palace which had its foundations on happiness crumbled away into ruin; and heaven came down kissing the earth and making it white.

He opened his hand and found in it three grains of seed, and then he knew that some of his dream was really coming to pass. For he saw the whole world was turning white before his eyes, all the trees and the grass; therefore he sowed the first grain of seed over the little grave that he had made, and set out over hill and dale to fulfil the dream that the Green Bird had given him. "But the Green Bird I shall see no more!" he said, and wept.

For a year he went on through a waste and desolate country, meeting no man, nor discovering any sign. Till one day as he was coming down a moun-

tain he saw at the bottom a hut with a round roof like a great tortoise; and when he got quite near, out of the door came a small white hand, palm upward, feeling to know if it rained. All at once he remembered the word of the Green Bird, and as he dropped the second seed into the ground it seemed to him that he heard again the three notes of its song.

A young girl looked out of the hut; "What do you want?" she said when she saw the Prince. He saw her eyes, how blue and smiling they were, and it seemed as if he had dreamed of them once. "Let me stay here for a little," he said, "and rest." "If you will rest one day and work the next, you may," she answered. So he rested that day, and the next he worked at her bidding in a small patch of ground that was before the hut.

When the day was over and he had returned to the hut for the night, he looked again at the young girl, and seeing how beautiful she was, said, "Why are you here all alone, with no one to protect you?" And she answered, "I have come from my own country, which is very far away, in search of a beautiful Green Bird which while it was mine I loved greatly, and which one day flew away promising to return. When you came, something made me think the bird was with you, but perhaps to-morrow it will return." At that the Prince sighed in his heart, for he knew that the bird was dead. Then also she told him how in her own country she had been a Princess; so now she from whom the Green Bird had flown, and he to whom it had come, were living there together like beggars in a hut.

For a whole year he toiled and waited, hoping for the second seed to sprout; and at last one day, just where he had planted it, he saw a little spring rising out of the ground. When the Princess saw it, she clapped her hands, "Oh," she cried, "it is the sign I have waited for! If we follow it, it will take us to the Green Bird." But the Prince sighed, for in his heart he knew that the Green Bird was dead.

Yet he let her take his hand, and they two went on following the course of the spring till they came to a wild desolate place full of ruins; and as soon as they came to it the spring disappeared into the ground.

Then the Prince began to look about him, and saw that he was standing once more in the land that he had lost, above the very spot in the enchanted garden where he had buried the Green Bird and sorrowed over it. Then he stooped down, and set the last grain of seed into the ground; and as he did so, surely from below the soil came the three sweet notes of a song! Then all at once the earth opened and out of it grew a tree, tall and green and waving, and out of the midst of the tree flew the Green Bird with its nest in its beak.

The sun was setting; in the east rose a full red moon: grey mists climbed out of the grass. The Bird sang and sang and sang; every note had the splendour of palace-walls and towers and gardens, and falling fountains. The Princess ran fast and let herself be caught in the Prince's arms while she listened.

Many times they hung together and kissed, and all the time the Bird sang on.

" I see the palace walls grow," said the Princess. " They are high as the hills, and the garden covers the valleys : and the sun and the moon lighten it." And, in truth, round them a new palace had grown, and the Green Bird was building his nest in the roof.

THE MAN WHO KILLED THE CUCKOO

ONCE upon a time there was a man who lived in a small house with a large garden. He made his living by gardening, while his wife looked after the house. They were better off than most of their neighbours, but they were an envious couple who looked sourly over the hedge at all who passed by, and took no man's advice about anything.

At the end of the garden stood a large pear-tree: and one day the man was working in the shade beneath it, when a cuckoo came and perched itself on the topmost branch, crying "Cuckoo, cuckoo!"

The man looked up with a frown on his face, and cried, "Get out of my tree, you noisy thing!" But the cuckoo only sat and stared at the landscape, going up and down on its two notes like a musical see-saw.

The man stooped down, and took up a clod of earth and cast it at the cuckoo, which immediately flew away.

A neighbour who was passing at the time saw him, and said, "It's ill-luck to drive away cuckoos: you would be better not to do it again." "Do it again?" cried the man. "If it comes into my tree again I'll kill it!" "Nobody dares kill a cuckoo;" replied the neighbour, "it's against Providence." "I'll not only kill it, if it returns," exclaimed the man in a fury, "but I'll eat it too!" "No, no,"

cried his neighbour, "you will think better of it. Even the parson daren't kill a cuckoo." "Wait and see if I don't better the parson, then!" growled the man, as he turned to go on with his work; "just wait and see!"

All the day he heard the cuckoo crying about in the field, now here, now there, but always somewhere close at hand. It seemed to be making a mock of him, for it always kept within sound, but never returned to the tree. When he left off work for the day, he went into the house and grumbled to his wife about that everlasting cuckoo. "Did you see what a big one it was?" said his wife. "I saw it as it sat in our tree this morning." "It will make all the bigger pie then," said the man, "if it comes again."

The next morning he had hardly begun to work, when the bird came and settled on the pear-tree over his head, and shouted "Cuckoo!"

Then the man took up a great stone, which he had by him ready, and aimed with all his might; his aim was so true, that the stone hit the bird on the side of the head, so that it fell down out of the tree into the grass in front of his feet.

"Wife," he shouted, "I've killed the cuckoo! Come and carry it in, and cook it for my dinner." "Oh, what a great fat one!" cried his wife, as she ran and picked it up by the neck; "and heavy! It feels as heavy as a turkey!"

She laid it in her apron, and went and sat in the doorway, and began plucking it, while her husband went on with his work. Presently she called to him, "Just look here at all these feathers! I never saw

anything like it ; there are enough to stuff a feather-bed ! " He looked round, and saw the ground all covered with a great heap of feathers that had been plucked from the bird : enough, as she said, for a feather-bed.

" This is a new discovery," cried he, " that a cuckoo holds so many feathers. We can make our fortunes in this way, wife—I going about killing cuckoos, and you plucking them into feather-beds."

Then his wife carried the cuckoo indoors, and set it down to roast. But directly the spit began to turn, the cat jumped up from before the front of the fire, and ran away screaming.

The smell of the roast came out to the man as he worked in his garden. " How good it smells ! " said he. " Don't *you* touch it, wife ! You mustn't have a bit ! " " I don't care if I don't," she replied : for she had watched it as it went turning on the spit ; and up and down, up and down, it kept moving its wings !

When dinner-time came the man sat down, and his wife dished up the bird, and set it upon the table before him. He ate it so greedily that he ate it all—the bones, and the back, and the head, and the wings, and the legs down to the last claw.

Then he pushed back his plate, and cried, " So there's an end of him ! " But just as he was about saying that, a voice from inside of him called, " Cuckoo ! cuckoo ! cuckoo ! "

" Oh my heart and liver ! " cried the man. " What's that ! "

Then his wife began laughing and jiggering at

him. "It's because you were so greedy. If you had given me half of that cuckoo this wouldn't have happened. Now you see you are paid."

"Cuckoo! cuckoo! cuckoo!" cried the voice again from within.

"What have I done to myself?" cried the man, in an agony of terror. "What a poisonous noise to come from a man's belly! I shall die of it, I know I shall!"

His wife only said, "See, then, what comes of being greedy."

He got up on to his feet, and looked down at his empty plate: there was not a scrap left on it. Then he put his hands to his sides, and shrieked, "I feel as if a windmill were turning round inside me! And I'm so light! Wife, hold me down—I'm going off my feet!" And as he spoke, he swung sideway, and began rising with a wobbling motion into the air. His wife caught him by the head, while his feet swung like the pendulum of a clock, and all the time a voice inside him kept calling, "Cuckoo! cuckoo! cuckoo! cuckoo!"

Presently it seemed to the unfortunate man as if the windmill had stopped, and he was able to strike the ground with his feet once more. "Oh, blessed Mother Earth!" he cried, and began rubbing it up and down with his feet, and caressing it as if it had been a pet animal. But his face had grown very white.

"Put me to bed," he said to his wife; and she put him to bed on the top of the great feather-mattress which she had made only that morning from the cuckoo-pluckings.

The cuckoo kept him awake far into the night, and his wife herself could get no sleep ; but towards morning he dozed off into a disturbed sort of slumber, and began to dream.

He felt his eyes turning inwards, so that he could see into the middle of his body. And there sat the cuckoo, like an unpleasant nestling, with great red eyes staring at him, and the wound on its head burning a blue flame. It seemed to grow and grow and grow, dislocating his bones, and thrusting aside his heart to make room for itself. Its wings seemed to be sawing out his ribs, and its head was pushed far up into his throat, where with its angry beak it seemed reaching to peck out his eyes. "I will torment you for ever," said the bird. "You shall have no peace until you let me go. I am the King of the Cuckoos ; I will give you no rest. You will be surprised at what I can do to you ; even in your despair you will be surprised." Then it drew down its head and pecked his heart, so that he woke in great pain. And as his eyes turned outwards he saw that it was morning.

"Wife," he said, before going out, "I feel as though, if I went out, I might be carried away, like a worm in a bird's beak. Fasten a chain round me, and drive it with a stake into the ground, and let me see if so I be able to work safely in my garden."

So his wife did as he told her ; but whenever he caught hold of a spade the bird lifted him off his feet, so that he could not drive it into the ground. He wrung his hands and wailed, "Alas, alas ! now my occupation is gone, and my wife and I shall become beggars ! "

The villagers came and looked over the hedge, wagging their heads. "Ah, you are the man who killed the cuckoo yesterday! and already you are come to this!"

Every day things got worse and worse. His wife used to have to hold him down and feed him with a spoon, for if he took up a knife to eat with, the bird hurled him upon it so violently as to put him in danger of his life. Also it kept him ceaselessly awake with its cry, so that he was worn to a shadow.

One day in the end of the month of June he heard a change come in its horrible singing; instead of crying "Cuckoo" as before, it now broke its note as is the cuckoo's habit to do before it goes abroad for the winter, and cried "Cuck-cuck-Cuckoo, cuck-cuck-Cuckoo!" Some sort of a hope came into the man's heart at that. "Presently it will be winter," he thought to himself, "and the cuckoo must die then, even if I have to eat ice and snow to make him! if only I do not die first," he added, and groaned, for he was now indeed but a shadow.

Soon after this the cuckoo left off its crying altogether. "Is he dead already?" thought the man. All the other cuckoos had gone out of the country: he grew quite happy with this new idea and began to put on flesh.

But one night, at the dead of night, the cuckoo felt a longing to be in lands oversea come into its wings. The man woke with a loud cry, and found himself sailing along through the air with only the stars overhead, and the feeling of a great windmill inside him. And the cuckoo was crying with a new note into the darkness: the cry it makes in far lands

oversea which is never heard in this country at all: a cry so strange and terrible and wonderful that we have no word that will give the sound of it. This man heard it, and at the sound his hair went quite white with fright.

When his wife woke up in the morning, her husband was nowhere to be seen. "So!" she said to herself, "the cuckoo has picked him up and thrown him away somewhere; and I suppose he is dead. Well, he was an uncomfortable husband to have; and it all came of being greedy."

She drew down the front blinds, and dressed herself in widow's mourning all through the winter; and the next spring told another man he might marry her if he liked. The other man happened to like the idea well enough, for there was a house and a nice garden for anyone who would have her. So the first fine day they went off to the Parson and got married.

It was a very fine day, and well on in spring: and just as they were coming back from the church they heard the note of a cuckoo.

The widow-bride felt a cold shiver go down her marrow. "It does make one feel queer," she said; "that sound gave me quite a turn." "Hullo! look at him up there!" cried the man. She stared up, and there was her husband sailing through the air, looking more of a shadow than ever, and very miserable with the voice of the cuckoo calling across the land from the inside of him.

The cuckoo deposited him at his own doorstep in front of the bridal couple.

"O you miserable scare-crow!" said his wife,

" whatever brought you back ? " The unhappy man pointed below the surface, and the shut-up cuckoo spoke for him.

" And here I find you marrying yourself to another ! " cried her returned spouse : but the other man had shrunk away in disgust and disappeared, so there was no more trouble with him.

But the old trouble was as bad as ever, the cuckoo was just as industrious in his cuckooings, and just as untimely : and the man went on wearing himself to a shadow with vexation and grief.

So all the summer went by, till again the cuckoo was heard to break its note into a double sound. But this time, no glimmer of hope came to the man's mind. " Tie me fast to the bed," he said sorrowfully to his wife, " and keep me there, lest this demon of a bird carry me away again as he did last year ; a thing which I could never survive a second time. Nay, give me a sheath-knife to keep always with me, for if he carry me away again I am resolved that he or I shall die."

So his wife gave him the sheath-knife, and by-and-by the bird became very quiet, so that they almost hoped he was dead from old age.

But one night, at the dead of night, into the birds wings came the longing to be once more in lands oversea. He stretched out his wings, and the man woke with a loud cry. And behold, there were he and his wife, sailing along under the stars tied into the feather-bed together, all complete and compact ; and inside him was the feeling of a great windmill going round and round and round.

Then in despair he drew out his sheath-knife and

cut himself open like a haggis. And on a sudden out flew the cuckoo, all plucked and bald and ready to roast. At the very same moment the bed-ticking burst, and away went the cuckoo with his feathers trailing after him, uttering through the darkness that strange terrible cry of the lands oversea.

But the man and his wife and the empty bed-ticking, they fell and they fell and they fell right down, till they got to the bottom of the deep blue sea; and there was an end of them.

A CHINESE FAIRY TALE

TIKI-PU was a small grub of a thing; but he had a true love of Art deep down in his soul. There it hung mewing and complaining, struggling to work its way out through the raw exterior that bound it.

Tiki-pu's master professed to be an artist: he had apprentices and students, who came daily to work under him, and a large studio littered about with the performances of himself and his pupils. On the walls hung also a few real works by the older men, all long since dead.

This studio Tiki-pu swept; for those who worked in it he ground colours, washed brushes, and ran errands, bringing them their dog chops and bird's nest soup from the nearest eating-house whenever they were too busy to go out to it themselves. He himself had to feed mainly on the breadcrumbs which the students screwed into pellets for their drawings and then threw about upon the floor. It was on the floor, also, that he had to sleep at night.

Tiki-pu looked after the blinds, and mended the paper window-panes, which were often broken when the apprentices threw their brushes and mahl-sticks at him. Also he strained rice-paper over the linen-stretchers, ready for the painters to work on; and for a treat, now and then, a lazy one would allow him to mix a colour for him. Then it was that Tiki-pu's soul came down into his finger-tips, and his heart beat so that he gasped for joy. Oh, the yellows and

the greens, and the lakes and the cobalts, and the purples which sprang from the blending of them! Sometimes it was all he could do to keep himself from crying out.

Tiki-pu, while he squatted and ground at the colour-powders, would listen to his master lecturing to the students. He knew by heart the names of all the painters and their schools, and the name of the great leader of them all who had lived and passed from their midst more than three hundred years ago; he knew that too, a name like the sound of the wind, Wio-wani: the big picture at the end of the studio was by him.

That picture! To Tiki-pu it seemed worth all the rest of the world put together, He knew, too, the story which was told of it, making it as holy to his eyes as the tombs of his own ancestors. The apprentices joked over it, calling it "Wio-wani's back-door," "Wio-wani's night-cap," and many other nicknames; but Tiki-pu was quite sure, since the picture was so beautiful, that the story must be true.

Wio-wani, at the end of a long life, had painted it; a garden full of trees and sunlight, with high-standing flowers and green paths, and in their midst a palace. "The place where I would like to rest," said Wio-wani, when it was finished.

So beautiful was it then, that the Emperor himself had come to see it; and gazing enviously at those peaceful walks, and the palace nestling among the trees, had sighed and owned that he too would be glad of such a resting-place. Then Wio-wani stepped into the picture, and walked away along a path till

he came, looking quite small and far-off, to a low door in the palace wall. Opening it, he turned and beckoned to the Emperor; but the Emperor did not follow; so Wio-wani went in by himself, and shut the door between himself and the world for ever.

That happened three hundred years ago; but for Tiki-pu the story was as fresh and true as if it had happened yesterday. When he was left to himself in the studio, all alone and locked up for the night, Tiki-pu used to go and stare at the picture till it was too dark to see, and at the little palace with the door in its wall by which Wio-wani had disappeared out of life. Then his soul would go down into his finger-tips, and he would knock softly and fearfully at the beautifully painted door, saying, "Wio-wani, are you there?"

Little by little in the long-thinking nights, and the slow early mornings when light began to creep back through the papered windows of the studio, Tiki-pu's soul became too much for him. He who could strain paper, and grind colours, and wash brushes, had everything within reach for becoming an artist, if it was the will of Fate that he should be one.

He began timidly at first, but in a little while he grew bold. With the first wash of light he was up from his couch on the hard floor and was daubing his soul out on scraps, and odds-and-ends, and stolen pieces of rice-paper.

Before long the short spell of daylight which lay between dawn and the arrival of the apprentices to their work did not suffice him. It took him so long to hide all traces of his doings, to wash out the

brushes, and rinse clean the paint-pots he had used, and on the top of that to get the studio swept and dusted, that there was hardly time left him in which to indulge the itching of his fingers.

Driven by necessity, he became a pilferer of candle-ends, picking them from their sockets in the lanterns which the students carried on dark nights. Now and then one of these would remember that, when last used, his lantern had had a candle in it, and would accuse Tiki-pu of having stolen it. "It is true," he would confess; "I was hungry—I have eaten it." The lie was so probable, he was believed easily, and was well beaten accordingly. Down in the ragged linings of his coat Tiki-pu could hear the candle-ends rattling as the buffeting and chastisement fell upon him, and often he trembled lest his hoard should be discovered. But the truth of the matter never leaked out; and at night, as soon as he guessed that all the world outside was in bed, Tiki-pu would mount one of his candles on a wooden stand and paint by the light of it, blinding himself over his task, till the dawn came and gave him a better and cheaper light to work by.

Tiki-pu quite hugged himself over the results; he believed he was doing very well. "If only Wio-wani were here to teach me," thought he, "I would be in the way to becoming a great painter!"

The resolution came to him one night that Wio-wani *should* teach him. So he took a large piece of rice-paper and strained it, and sitting down opposite "Wio-wani's back-door," began painting. He had never set himself so big a task as this; by the dim stumbling light of his candle he strained his eyes

nearly blind over the difficulties of it; and at last was almost driven to despair. How the trees stood row behind row, with air and sunlight between, and how the path went in and out, winding its way up to the little door in the palace-wall were mysteries he could not fathom. He peered and peered and dropped tears into his paint-pots; but the secret of the mystery of such painting was far beyond him.

The door in the palace-wall opened; out came a little old man and began walking down the pathway towards him.

The soul of Tiki-pu gave a sharp leap in his grubby little body. "That must be Wio-wani himself and no other!" cried his soul.

Tiki-pu pulled off his cap and threw himself down on the floor with reverent grovellings. When he dared to look up again Wio-wani stood over him big and fine; just within the edge of his canvas he stood and reached out a hand.

"Come along with me, Tiki-pu!" said the great one. "If you want to know how to paint I will teach you."

"Oh, Wio-wani, were you there all the while?" cried Tiki-pu ecstatically, leaping up and clutching with his smeary little puds the hand which the old man extended to him.

"I was there," said Wio-wani, "looking at you out of my little window. Come along in!"

Tiki-pu took a heave and swung himself into the picture, and fairly capered when he found his feet among the flowers of Wio-wani's beautiful garden. Wio-wani had turned, and was ambling gently back to the door of his palace, beckoning to the small

one to follow him; and there stood Tiki-pu, opening his mouth like a fish to all the wonders that surrounded him. "Celestiality, may I speak?" he said suddenly.

"Speak," replied Wio-wani; "what is it?"

"The Emperor, was he not the very flower of fools not to follow when you told him?"

"I cannot say," answered Wio-wani, "but he certainly was no artist."

Then he opened the door, that door which he had so beautifully painted, and led Tiki-pu in. And outside the little candle-end sat and guttered by itself, till the wick fell overboard, and the flame kicked itself out, leaving the studio in darkness and solitude to wait for the growings of another dawn.

It was full day before Tiki-pu reappeared; he came running down the green path in great haste, jumped out of the frame on to the studio floor, and began tidying up his own messes of the night, and the apprentices' of the previous day. Only just in time did he have things ready by the hour when his master and the others returned to their work.

All that day they kept scratching their left ears, and could not think why; but Tiki-pu knew, for he was saying over to himself all the things that Wio-wani, the great painter, had been saying about them and their precious productions. And as he ground their colours for them and washed their brushes, and filled his famished little body with the breadcrumbs they threw away, little they guessed from what an immeasurable distance he looked down upon them all, and had Wio-wani's word for it tickling his right ear all the day long.

Now before long Tiki-pu's master noticed a change in him; and though he bullied him, and thrashed him, and did all that a careful master should do, he could not get the change out of him. So in a short while he grew suspicious. "What is the boy up to?" he wondered. "I have my eye on him all day: it must be at night that he gets into mischief."

It did not take Tiki-pu's master a night's watching to find that something surreptitious was certainly going on. When it was dark he took up his post outside the studio, to see whether by any chance Tiki-pu had some way of getting out; and before long he saw a faint light showing through the window. So he came and thrust his finger softly through one of the panes, and put his eye to the hole.

There inside was a candle burning on a stand, and Tiki-pu squatting with paint-pots and brush in front of Wio-wani's last masterpiece.

"What fine piece of burglary is this?" thought he; "what serpent have I been harbouring in my bosom? Is this beast of a grub of a boy thinking to make himself a painter and cut me out of my reputation and prosperity?" For even at that distance he could perceive plainly that the work of this boy went head and shoulders beyond his, or that of any painter then living.

Presently Wio-wani opened his door and came down the path, as was his habit now each night, to call Tiki-pu to his lesson. He advanced to the front of his picture and beckoned for Tiki-pu to come in with him; and Tiki-pu's master grew clammy at the knees as he beheld Tiki-pu catch hold of Wio-wani's hand and jump into the picture, and skip up the

green path by Wio-wani's side, and in through the little door that Wio-wani had painted so beautifully in the end wall of his palace!

For a time Tiki-pu's master stood glued to the spot with grief and horror. "Oh, you deadly little underling! Oh, you poisonous little caretaker, you parasite, you vampire, you fly in amber!" cried he, "is that where you get your training? Is it there that you dare to go trespassing; into a picture that I purchased for my own pleasure and profit, and not at all for yours? Very soon we will see whom it really belongs to!"

He ripped out the paper of the largest window-pane and pushed his way through into the studio. Then in great haste he took up paint-pot and brush, and sacrilegiously set himself to work upon Wio-wani's last masterpiece. In the place of the doorway by which Tiki-pu had entered he painted a solid brick wall; twice over he painted it, making it two bricks thick; brick by brick he painted it, and mortared every brick to its place. And when he had quite finished he laughed, and called "Good-night, Tiki-pu!" and went home to be quite happy.

The next day all the apprentices were wondering what had become of Tiki-pu; but as the master himself said nothing, and as another boy came to act as colour-grinder and brush-washer to the establishment, they very soon forgot all about him.

In the studio the master used to sit at work with his students all about him, and a mind full of ease and contentment. Now and then he would throw a glance across to the bricked-up doorway of

Wio-wani's palace, and laugh to himself, thinking how well he had served out Tiki-pu for his treachery and presumption.

One day—it was five years after the disappearance of Tiki-pu—he was giving his apprentices a lecture on the glories and the beauties and the wonders of Wio-wani's painting—how nothing for colour could excel, or for mystery could equal it. To add point to his eloquence, he stood waving his hands before Wio-wani's last masterpiece, and all his students and apprentices sat round him and looked.

Suddenly he stopped at mid-word, and broke off in the full flight of his eloquence, as he saw something like a hand come and take down the top brick from the face of paint which he had laid over the little door in the palace-wall which Wio-wani had so beautifully painted. In another moment there was no doubt about it; brick by brick the wall was being pulled down, in spite of its double thickness.

The lecturer was altogether too dumbfounded and terrified to utter a word. He and all his apprentices stood round and stared while the demolition of the wall proceeded. Before long he recognised Wio-wani with his flowing white beard; it was his handiwork, this pulling down of the wall! He still had a brick in his hand when he stepped through the opening that he had made, and close after him stepped Tiki-pu!

Tiki-pu was grown tall and strong—he was even handsome; but for all that his old master recognised him, and saw with an envious foreboding that under his arms he carried many rolls and stretchers and portfolios, and other belongings of his craft.

Clearly Tiki-pu was coming back into the world, and was going to be a great painter.

Down the garden path came Wio-wani, and Tiki-pu walked after him; Tiki-pu was so tall that his head stood well over Wio-wani's shoulders—old man and young man together made a handsome pair.

How big Wio-wani grew as he walked down the avenues of his garden and into the foreground of his picture! and how big the brick in his hand! and ah, how angry he seemed!

Wio-wani came right down to the edge of the picture-frame and held up the brick. "What did you do that for?" he asked.

"I . . . didn't!" Tiki-pu's old master was beginning to reply; and the lie was still rolling on his tongue when the weight of the brick-bat, hurled by the stout arm of Wio-wani, felled him. After that he never spoke again. That brick-bat, which he himself had reared, became his own tombstone.

Just inside the picture-frame stood Tiki-pu, kissing the wonderful hands of Wio-wani, which had taught him all their skill. "Good-bye, Tiki-pu!" said Wio-wani, embracing him tenderly. "Now I am sending my second self into the world. When you are tired and want rest come back to me: old Wio-wani will take you in."

Tiki-pu was sobbing and the tears were running down his cheeks as he stepped out of Wio-wani's wonderfully painted garden and stood once more upon earth. Turning, he saw the old man walking away along the path towards the little door under the palace-wall. At the door Wio-wani turned back and waved his hand for the last time. Tiki-

pu still stood watching him. Then the door opened and shut, and Wio-wani was gone. Softly as a flower the picture seemed to have folded its leaves over him.

Tiki-pu leaned a wet face against the picture and kissed the door in the palace-wall which Wio-wani had painted so beautifully. "O Wio-wani, dear master," he cried, "are you there?"

He waited, and called again, but no voice answered him.

HAPPY RETURNS

BY the side of a great river, whose stream formed the boundary to two countries, lived an old ferryman and his wife. All the day, while she minded the house, he sat in his boat by the ferry, waiting to carry travellers across; or, when no travellers came, and he had his boat free, he would cast drag-nets along the bed of the river for fish. But for the food which he was able thus to procure at times, he and his wife might well have starved, for travellers were often few and far between, and often they grudged him the few pence he asked for ferrying them; and now he had grown so old and feeble that when the river was in flood he could scarcely ferry the boat across; and continually he feared lest a younger and stronger man should come and take his place, and the bread from his mouth.

But he had trust in Providence. "Will not God," he said, "who has given us no happiness in this life, save in each other's help and companionship, allow us to end our days in peace?"

And his wife answered, "Yes, surely, if we trust Him enough He will."

One morning, it being the first day of the year, the ferryman going down to his boat, found that during the night it had been loosed from its moorings and taken across the river, where it now lay fastened to the further bank.

"Wife," said he "I can remember this same thing

happening a year ago, and the year before also. Who is this traveller who comes once a year, like a thief in the night, and crosses without asking me to ferry him over ? "

" Perhaps it is the good folk," said his wife. " Go over and see if they have left no coin behind them in the boat."

The old man got on to a log and poled himself across, and found, down in the keel of the boat, the mark of a man's bare foot driven deep into the wood ; but there was no coin or other trace to show who it might be.

Time went on ; the old ferryman was all bowed down with age, and his body was racked with pains. So slow was he now in making the passage of the stream, that all travellers who knew those parts took a road higher up the bank, where a stronger ferryman plied.

Winter came ; and hunger and want pressed hard at the old man's door. One day while he drew his net along the stream, he felt the shock of a great fish striking against the meshes down below, and presently, as the net came in, he saw a shape like living silver, leaping and darting to and fro to find some way of escape. Up to the bank he landed it, a great gasping fish.

When he was about to kill it, he saw, to his astonishment, tears running out of its eyes, that gazed at him and seemed to reproach him for his cruelty. As he drew back, the Fish said : " Why should you kill me, who wish to live ? "

The old man, altogether bewildered at hearing himself thus addressed, answered : " Since I and my

wife are hungry, and God gave you to be eaten, I have good reason for killing you."

"I could give you something worth far more than a meal," said the Fish, "if you would spare my life."

"We are old," said the ferryman, "and want only to end our days in peace. To-day we are hungry; what can be more good for us than a meal which will give us strength for the morrow, which is the new year?"

The Fish said: "To-night someone will come and unfasten your boat, and ferry himself over, and you know nothing of it till the morning, when you see the craft moored out yonder by the further bank."

The old man remembered how the thing had happened in previous years, directly the Fish spoke. "Ah, you know that then! How is it?" he asked.

"When you go back to your hut at night to sleep, I am here in the water," said the Fish. "I see what goes on."

"What goes on, then?" asked the old man, very curious to know who the strange traveller might be.

"Ah," said the Fish, "if you could only catch him in your boat, he could give you something you might wish for! I tell you this: do you and your wife keep watch in the boat all night, and when he comes, and you have ferried him into mid-stream, where he cannot escape, then throw your net over him and hold him till he pays you for all your ferryings."

"How shall he pay me? All my ferryings of a lifetime!"

"Make him take you to the land of Returning

Time. There, at least, you can end your days in peace."

The old man said : " You have told me a strange thing ; and since I mean to act on it, I suppose I must let you go. If you have deceived me, I trust you may yet die a cruel death."

The Fish answered : " Do as I tell you, and you shall die a happy one." And, saying this he slipped down into the water and disappeared.

The ferryman went back to his wife supperless, and said to her : " Wife, bring a net, and come down into the boat ! " And he told her the story of the Fish and of the yearly traveller.

They sat long together under the dark bank, looking out over the quiet and cold moonlit waters, till the midnight hour. The air was chill, and to keep themselves warm they covered themselves over with the net and lay down in the bottom of the boat. It was the very hour when the old year dies and the new year is born.

Before they well knew that they had been asleep, they started to feel the rocking of the boat, and found themselves out upon the broad waters of the river. And there in the fore-part of the boat, clear and sparkling in the moonlight, stood a naked man of shining silver. He was bending upon the pole of the boat, and his long hair fell over it right down into the water.

The old couple rose up quietly, and unwinding themselves from the net, threw it over the Silver Man, over his head and hands and feet, and dragged him down into the bottom of the boat.

The old man caught the ferry pole, and heaved the

boat still into the middle of the stream. As he did so a gentle shock came to the heart of each; feebly it fluttered and sank low. "Oh, wife!" sighed the old man, and reached out his hand for hers.

The Silver Man lay still in the folds of the net, and looked at them with a wise and quiet gaze. "What would you have of me?" he said, and his voice was far off and low.

They said, "Bring us into the land of Returning Time."

The Silver Man said: "Only once can you go there, and once return."

They both answered "We wish once to go there, and once return."

So he promised them that they should have the whole of their request; and they unloosed him from the net, and landed altogether on the further bank.

Up the hill they went, following the track of the Silver Man. Presently they reached its crest; and there before them lay all the howling winter of the world.

The Silver Man turned his face and looked back; and looking back it became all young, and ruddy, and bright. The ferryman and his wife gazed at him, both speechless at the wonderful change. He took their hands, making them turn the way by which they had come; below their feet was a deep black gulf, and beyond and away lay nothing but a dark starless hollow of air.

"Now," said their guide, "you have but to step forward one step, and you shall be in the land of Returning Time."

They loosed hold of his hands, joined clasp, husband with wife, and at one step upon what seemed gulf beneath their feet, found themselves in a green and flowery land. There were perfumed valleys and grassy hills, whose crops stretched down before the breeze; thick fleecy clouds crossed their tops, and overhead amid a blue air rang the shrill trilling of birds. Behind lay, fading mistily as a dream, the bare world they had left; and fast on his forward road, growing small to them from a distance, went the Silver Man, a shining point on the horizon.

The ferryman and his wife looked, and saw youth in each other's faces beginning to peep out through the furrows of age; each step they took made them grow younger and stronger; years fell from them like worn-out rags as they went down into the valleys of the land of Returning Time.

How fast Time returned! Each step made the change of a day, and every mile brought them five years back towards youth. When they came down to the streams that ran in the bed of each valley, the ferryman and his wife felt their prime return to them. He saw the gold come back into her locks, and she the brown into his. Their lips became open to laughter and song. "Oh, how good," they cried, "to have lived all our lives poor, to come at last to this!"

They drank water out of the streams, and tasted the fruit from the trees that grew over them; till presently, being tired for mere joy, they lay down in the grass to rest. They slept hand within hand and cheek against cheek, and, when they woke,

found themselves quite young again, just at the age when they were first married in the years gone by.

The ferryman started up and felt the desire of life strong in his blood. "Come!" he said to his wife, "or we shall become too young with lingering here. Now we have regained our youth, let us go back into the world once more!"

His wife hung upon his hand, "Are we not happy enough," she asked, "as it is? Why should we return?"

"But," he cried, "we shall grow too young; now we have youth and life at its best let us return! Time goes too fast with us; we are in danger of it carrying us away."

She said no further word, but followed up towards the way by which they had entered. And yet, in spite of her wish to remain, as she went her young blood frisked. Presently coming to the top of a hill, they set off running and racing; at the bottom they looked at each other, and saw themselves boy and girl once more.

"We have stayed here too long!" said the ferryman, and pressed on.

"Oh, the birds," sighed she, "and the flowers, and the grassy hills to run on, we are leaving behind!" But still the boy had the wish for a man's life again, and urged her on; and still with every step they grew younger and younger. At length, two small children, they came to the border of that enchanted land, and saw beyond the world bleak and wintry and without leaf. Only a further step was wanted to bring them face to face once more with the hard battle of life.

Tears rose in the child-wife's eyes : " If we go," she said, " we can never return ! " Her husband looked long at her wistful face ; he, too, was more of a child now, and was forgetting his wish to be a man again.

He took hold of her hand and turned round with her, and together they faced once more the flowery orchards, and the happy watered valleys.

Away down there light streams tinkled, and birds called. Downwards they went, slowly at first, then with dancing feet, as with shoutings and laughter they ran.

Down into the level fields they ran ; their running was turned to a toddling ; their toddling to a tumbling ; their tumbling to a slow crawl upon hands and feet among the high grass and flowers ; till at last they were lying side by side, curled up into a cuddly ball, chuckling and dimpling and crowing to the insects and birds that passed over them.

Then they heard the sweet laughter of Father Time ; and over the hill he came, young, ruddy, and shining, and gathered them up sound asleep on the old boat by the ferry.

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